

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, September 1, 2019

The Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than ten years.

RANKING OURSELVES

In an army, a corporal is more important than a private, a sergeant more important than a corporal, and of course a general outranks them both.

In a college setting, a tenured professor has a higher status than the students or teaching assistants, and the academic dean is above them all.

In our governmental system, a governor has more power than a mayor, but a mayor has more influence than members of the city council.

None of that information comes as a surprise. The status of those in the military, on college campuses, and in the halls of government is well known. However, in other situations rankings are not as evident or accepted.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 14:1, 7-14) Jesus tells a parable about people at a wedding banquet arguing about who deserved the places of honor at the head table. Obviously, there were differences of opinion. Each guest, at least in his own estimation, thought he outranked the others who had been invited.

We live in a world much like that described in the parable – a status-conscious society where people often judge themselves as more important than others. Like the guests at the wedding banquet, they think they deserve the "best places."

We see that in the way many people drive. They drive as if they deserved the places of honor on the road. In their estimation, their travels and their time are more important than those of their fellow drivers.

We see that in the manner some people treat the waiter, the store clerk, or the maintenance worker. They consider those service people as ranking below them on the social ladder, as deserving of little respect.

We see that in the way certain people speak about those who hold political opinions or ideas different from their own. Those with opposing views are thought of as being ignorant, bigoted, racist, or worse. Such people are negatively viewed by those who rank themselves as better educated, informed, and sophisticated.

We see that in the manner many individuals regard the sick, the elderly, and the poor. In their ranking system such people are near the bottom for they have little political power or financial influence. At the table of life, they barely rate a seat near the kitchen door.

If we are honest, we have a tendency to rank ourselves in relationship to other people. In our rating system, like that in the Gospel, we often find reasons why we deserve “places of honor at the table.”

Yet Jesus tells us not to rank ourselves above others, but to humble ourselves. In fact, he tells us to “invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind” into our circle of care and concern. We are not to look down on others, but to look out for them as fellow children of God.

What Jesus asks of us is what he himself did for us. As the Son of God he outranked us all, but he humbled himself and came as our Savior. “Though he was in the form of God he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8)

Today’s Gospel warns us about the dangers of rating ourselves above others, for as Jesus tells us, “every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

2019 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski