

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, September 2, 2018

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.

EASY LISTENING

There are many different styles of music. There is Jazz, Soft Rock, Hard Rock, Country, Gospel, Easy Listening, Classical, Rap, Latin, Folk, Hip Hop, Electronic, Doo Wop, Blues, and more. When we want to listen to music, we pick the style that we most enjoy or that suits our mood at the moment.

One of the most prevalent kinds of music is Easy Listening. It's the music we hear in the waiting room, the hotel lobby, the elevator, the restaurant, the mall, and in other public places.

Easy Listening music is just there. It's background sound. It's not distracting, and often it's hardly noticed. Easy Listening music is like vanilla ice cream. It's nice but not exciting.

When it comes to listening to the scriptures, many people prefer "easy listening."

They want to hear words that speak about Jesus being our gentle, caring shepherd. Words that assure us that God cares for us as he cares for the birds of the sky and the lilies of the field.

Words that tell us not to worry or be afraid. Words that speak of God as a loving, understanding, and merciful Father. Words that promise us there is a place prepared for us in the kingdom of heaven.

Many people also prefer "easy listening" sermons to go with such readings.

They want sermons that are optimistic and encouraging and that promise that tomorrow will be better than today...sermons that proclaim that those who accept Jesus as Savior will be blessed with healing, success, and prosperity...sermons that are full of love and positive thinking.

But the scriptures were not given to us to be "easy listening," undemanding background noise. God gave us his word so that hearing it, we might turn from sin and we might live according to the Father's will just as Jesus did.

Consider the scriptures that we will hear this Sunday.

In the First Reading (Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8), Moses tells the Chosen People to carefully obey all the statutes and decrees of the Lord that he has taught them. Doing so will bring them life and show them to be wise and intelligent people.

In the Second Reading (James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27), James tells his readers that they are to "be doers of the word and not hearers only." He tells them that they are to care for orphans and widows and to keep themselves unstained by the darkness and sin of the world.

Then in the Gospel Reading (Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23), Jesus teaches his disciples that religion is not just a matter of observing external rituals or saying holy words. It is far harder than that. It is a matter of making certain that one's heart, one's conscience, is right with God. It means

avoiding “unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly.”

God’s word is not “easy listening” for it confronts us with our sinfulness. It shows us the speech, attitudes, and actions we need to change to be true followers of Christ.

It is a happy coincidence that these readings fall on Labor Day Weekend. They remind us of the labor and effort required to turn from sin and to live the Gospel in our daily lives.

“Easy listening” music may be fine but tuning in only to “easy listening” scripture readings and sermons is definitely not!

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