

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, September 3, 2017**

## ***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

### **CONFORMITY**

No child wants to be considered odd, strange, or weird by his or her peers. Children want to fit in and to be accepted so they tend to imitate the young people around them. They conform.

But children are not the only ones who act that way. We adults do the same. We tend to copy the behavior, styles, and attitudes of the society in which we live. Just like those who are younger, we also want to be accepted so we conform.

Such conformity is not necessarily a bad thing. Society needs conformity to function. We certainly would not want to drive in a city where no one followed the rules of the road. We would not want to live in a community where individuals did not adhere to certain rules of social interaction. Without some level of conformity there would be chaos.

Our readings this Sunday are about conforming and not conforming.

In the First Reading (Jeremiah 20:7-9) the Prophet Jeremiah complains to God about the derision, mockery, and reproach that he is enduring. His suffering comes about because the message from God that he is proclaiming does not conform to what the people want to hear.

In the Second Reading (Romans 12:1-2), St. Paul says, "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." He tells us we are to "discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect." If we are to be faithful Christians our way of living has to conform to God's expectations of us and not to the expectations and ideas of our ever-shifting culture.

In the Gospel (Matthew 16:21-27), Peter criticizes Jesus for speaking about his coming suffering and death in Jerusalem. Peter could not accept such negative talk for it did not conform to his expectations of the coming messiah. For Peter and for the Jews of his day, the long-awaited messiah was to be a victorious leader who would restore the Kingdom of Israel. But as Jesus told Peter, "You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

In Sunday's Gospel Jesus also teaches us that winning in life does not mean coming in first, but rather it means denying ourselves, carrying our cross, and putting God above all else. As Jesus says, "What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" That message certainly does not conform to our society's understanding that success in life means attaining power, prestige, position, and wealth.

This Sunday's readings remind us that faithful followers of Christ do not always fit in with the culture and society in which they live. At times, being a Christian means being a non-conformist!