

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, September 7, 2014**

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on the Gospel Reading 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.

## **NOT PERFECT**

Little children see their parents as perfect. Mom and Dad have all the answers. They can do no wrong. They can handle any situation. They are super heroes in the minds of their little ones.

But as children grow and mature, they come to realize that Mom and Dad are not the perfect beings they imagined. Mom and Dad have flaws like the rest of humanity.

What children discover about their parents, they also discover about others in authority and about institutions.

As we grow into adulthood, we learn that not all government leaders are paragons of virtue, that some star athletes use banned performance enhancing drugs, that not every business honors its guarantees and contracts, that teachers and employers do not always act in the best interest of those in their charge, that promotions and awards often go to the well-connected and not to the most deserving, and that some individuals who have sworn to uphold the law at times break it themselves.

Part of growing up involves learning that people and institutions are flawed and realizing that in life we have to deal with imperfect people and institutions.

However, it seems that many people, no matter their age or maturity, expect one institution to be absolutely perfect all the time. When they discover it is not, they walk out the door and leave it behind. That institution is the Church.

Yet this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 18:15-20) indicates that from the start Jesus knew his Church would not be perfect. It would be an imperfect institution composed of flawed individuals. If Jesus thought his Church would be perfect why would he have taught his disciples how to deal with people who diminish its holiness and cause problems for others?

In the Gospel, Jesus gives a three-step process to deal with those who sin against us and the Church. He says that first we should speak to the offender privately in a loving and prayerful way. If that does no good, we should approach the person a second time, but now accompanied by one or two other individuals who share our concerns. If this also fails, we should bring the matter to the Church community.

If all those approaches are unsuccessful and the person continues to sin, Jesus says we are to treat the offending individual "as you would a Gentile or a tax collector." That may mean expelling the person from the Church, or it may mean showing the individual even greater love and mercy. For that is how Jesus treated the Gentiles and tax collectors that he encountered.

If we refuse to have anything to do with people and institutions that are imperfect, we will find ourselves becoming increasingly disconnected and self-righteous. Imperfect, flawed people are

everywhere, even in God's Church. If they were not, Jesus would not have told us how to deal with them nor would he have given us the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Over time, we discover that like Mom and Dad the Church is not perfect. But despite its imperfections, the Church is still the best place to meet Jesus Christ. For as he promised, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

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