

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, September 13, 2015**

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.

## **WHAT CROSS IS OURS?**

People do all they can to avoid suffering and pain in life, and if suffering and pain come, they do everything possible to alleviate the cause.

People visit medical doctors if they have physical pain. They make appointments with psychologists and psychiatrists to deal with stress, anxiety, and depression. They go to specialists to manage chronic pain. They seek out counselors to deal with heartache and relationship problems. They take over-the-counter and prescription medicines to ease their hurt and some even turn to illegal drugs. And those with faith, pray to God to take away their suffering; they go to healing Masses; they seek out individuals who claim to possess healing powers; and still others try bargaining with God.

Yet this Sunday's Gospel (Mark 8:27-35) might lead some people to think that Christians are supposed to willingly endure suffering and pain in life. There Jesus tells his disciples "that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days." He then goes on to say, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Certainly there is no greater symbol of pain and suffering in Christianity than the cross.

Yet Jesus cannot want his followers to passively embrace all pain and suffering. After all, in his ministry Jesus did all he could to alleviate human suffering and pain. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and movement to the crippled. He healed those with leprosy and restored them to their communities. He reached out to sinners and the despised and embraced them with love and acceptance. He fed the hungry. He freed those tormented by demons and mental anguish. His healing powers were so great that all those dealing with suffering and pain sought him out as soon as his presence was known. "They brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. The whole town was gathered at the door." (Mark 1:32-33)

When Jesus speaks about his followers enduring the cross, he is speaking primarily of the crosses that come with being a disciple in today's society. Jesus is speaking of the misunderstanding, the ridicule, the snide remarks, the condescending attitude, the social ostracism, and also the persecution, suffering, and death that can come to those who openly profess their Christian faith in certain parts of our world.

Jesus Christ certainly does not want his disciples to do nothing about the suffering and pain in their lives or in the lives of their neighbors. But he does expect us to be willing to endure the crosses that come into our lives because we are living as Christians, living as his faithful followers.

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