

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, September 13, 2020

The Twenty-Fourth 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 eleven years.

MERCY FOR MERCY

Imagine you were required by your employer to represent your company at a social function where you would probably not know a single person.

When you arrived, things were just as you had feared. You were in a hall filled with strangers. As you were standing there, feeling out of place, wondering how quickly you could make an exit, someone walked over to you.

That person introduced himself and started a conversation. He then made a point to lead you over to some of his co-workers. They welcomed you into their group and invited you to join them at their table for the rest of the program.

Thanks to the person who recognized your discomfort and reached out to you, you had an enjoyable time at the event. You might say you went from feeling like a fish out of water to swimming with a "school" of friendly fish.

If you appreciated the kindness you were shown, you would most likely be sensitive to a stranger you saw in similar circumstances. You would make a connection between your situation in the past and that person's situation in the present. That might lead you to go over to that person, introduce yourself, and try to make him or her feel welcome and comfortable. You would do what someone had done for you.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 18:21-35), we meet a person who could not see the connection between his personal situation and that of a co-worker.

Jesus tells a parable about a king who was settling accounts with his servants. One servant was brought before the king who owed an enormous amount of money. Since he was unable to pay, the king ordered him and his family members to be sold into slavery and all his property confiscated. When the servant pleaded with his master for mercy, the master wrote off the entire debt and let the servant go free. That debtor was shown boundless mercy.

But when that servant met a fellow servant who owed him a small fraction of the amount that he himself had been forgiven, he ordered that servant to be imprisoned for lack of payment.

Apparently, the first servant could not see any connection between the kindness shown him when he was in a desperate situation and that of his fellow servant in an equally dire circumstance.

When he had pleaded with his master, "Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full," his words were heard. In fact, his master did more than just show patience: he forgave the entire debt.

Yet when that servant heard his fellow servant say almost the same words, "Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full," those words made no impact on him at all.

The one whose debt had been canceled saw no connection between what he had said to his master and what his fellow servant said to him.

If we are to show forgiveness, mercy, and compassion to others, we first need to realize the connection between the mercy God continually shows us and the mercy we are to show to others.

As Christians, we must see the connection between the way God treats us and the way we are to treat others.

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