

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, September 14, 2014

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

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.

CROSSING OUT

"Think carefully before you mark your answer sheet. Once you make your choice you cannot cross out your answer."

Students hear instructions like this when they take a multiple choice test that will be electronically scored. Once an answer is marked, it cannot be crossed out and replaced with a different response. Crossing out is not permitted. The first answer is the final answer.

This Sunday the Church celebrates the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, a feast that teaches us that God takes a different approach. God allows a wrong answer to be changed, to be "crossed out."

In the beginning, God created man and woman and invited them to have a loving, life-giving relationship with Him. But they failed to respond as God asked. Rather than using the free will God had given them to be his faithful, loving, and obedient children that first man and woman chose to go their own way. They disobeyed God. We might say that they checked off NO on humanity's original answer sheet.

Since that time men and women have continued to do the same. They have chosen to follow their will rather than God's will. They have continued to mark off NO when it comes to living according to God's plan for their good and for the good of the world. They have sinned.

Yet despite humanity's turn from God, God did not give up on his children. As we read in this Sunday's Gospel (John 3:13-17), "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

In the Incarnation the Son of God took on flesh and came among his people. "He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2: 7-8)

As the divine Son of God, Jesus Christ invited humanity to turn from sin and to be the loving, compassionate, faithful, generous, and obedient children of God that they were meant to be.

As a human being, as one of us, Jesus Christ perfectly responded to what God asked of his people. As Jesus prayed that first Holy Thursday night, "Father ... not my will but yours be done." (Luke 22:42) Doing the will of God led Jesus to suffering and death on a cross. But Jesus embraced that cross, not because a harsh God required him to suffer, but because as a loving and faithful Son, Jesus was willing to endure the cross rather than deny his mission and his relationship with the Father.

The cross became the dramatic, unmistakable sign of Jesus' faithfulness to God. By his cross, we might say that Jesus "crossed out" humanity's NO to God and changed it to a YES.

As people who were marked with the cross at our baptism and who mark ourselves with the cross when we pray, we are to follow the example of Jesus. By our faithfulness, we too are to “cross out” humanity’s continuing NO to God and replace it with our own resounding YES.

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