

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, September 15, 2019

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 ten years.

GUILTY AS CHARGED!

"He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?" (Mark 2:7)

"He is possessed by Beelzebub. By the prince of demons he drives out demons." (Mark 3:22)

"He opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar." (Luke 23:2)"

"He is inciting the people with his teachings throughout all Judea." (Luke 23:5)

Those were some of the charges made against Jesus by the scribes and Pharisees and other religious authorities. They were false charges that Jesus denied.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 15:1-32), the Pharisees and scribes make another charge against Jesus when they notice that "tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus."

They accuse Jesus of associating with the wrong kind of people. As they observed, "this man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Jesus did not deny that charge. Rather he embraced it. As he says in the Gospel of Mark, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners." (Mark 2:17)

Unlike the other charges hurled against Jesus, this one was absolutely true. Jesus was associating with the kind of people that the scribes and Pharisees believed should be avoided at all costs. In their way of thinking, good people had to stay away from those judged to be unclean sinners.

In response to that way of thinking, Jesus goes on to tell three parables to justify his associating with those lost in sin.

He speaks about a shepherd searching for a lost sheep. He tells about a woman diligently looking for a lost coin. He relates a story about a worried father joyfully welcoming home a son who had been lost in sin and selfishness.

Like the shepherd, like the woman, and like the father, Jesus also goes out and seeks the lost.

If Adam and Eve had not disobeyed God, if humanity had not become lost in sin, there would have been no reason "for the Son of Man to come to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:10)

As the scribes and Pharisees alleged, Jesus did associate with tax collectors and sinners.

That accusation can still be made against Jesus. He continues to associate with weak and sinful people – Jesus associates with us. That happens at every Mass as we gather at the table of the

Lord. It happens each time a sinner is welcomed home in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It happens each time Christians gather in his name.

When it comes to being accused of associating with sinners, Jesus is guilty as charged!

2019 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski