

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, September 23, 2018**

## ***The Twenty-Fifth 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.

### **AMBITION**

Is ambition a good thing or a bad thing?

Is it a compliment or a criticism to be described as being ambitious?

After listening to this Sunday's scripture readings we might conclude that ambition is not a good thing and being seen as ambitious is incompatible with being a Christian.

In this Sunday's Second Reading (James 3:16-4:3), James seems to say that ambition gives rise to sin. He says, "Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice."

In the Gospel Reading (Mark 9:30-37), Jesus criticizes his disciples for their ambition to be seen as the greatest. As they walk toward Capernaum, the disciples argue among themselves about who has the most status and glory. Each claims that he should be recognized as the most important.

Ambition seems to be, at least at first glance, a bad thing.

Yet what sports fan would cheer on a team whose players were not ambitious, who had little desire to be make their team number one in the league?

What parent would want their child not to be ambitious when it came to his or her education? Parents want their children to work hard and to be recognized for their academic success.

What employer would hire employees with no ambition, with no drive? Employers look for workers who are motivated, who seek to advance, and who want to make the firm even more successful.

The scripture readings this Sunday do not warn us about all ambition, they warn us against selfish ambition. They warn us about caring only for our personal status and power.

In the Gospel, Jesus wants his disciples to be ambitious not for personal glory, but to be ambitious to serve the needs of others, particularly, the poor and powerless. He tells them they should "be the last of all and the servant of all."

Then to illustrate his point, Jesus takes a child, who had no status in the society of his day, and says "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."

In the second Reading, James emphasizes that we need wisdom from above to see what is truly important and to avoid selfish ambition.

There are two kinds of ambition. There is selfish ambition that leads us to seek personal glory and status. Then there is selfless ambition that leads us to follow the example of Jesus who "did

not come to be served but to serve.” (Matthew 20:28) There is a world of difference between those two types of ambition!

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