

## ***LOOKING TO SUNDAY®***

**Sunday, September 28, 2025**

### ***The Twenty-Sixth 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 sixteen years.

### **ARGUING GUILT OR INNOCENCE**

The Lincoln Lawyer, To Kill A Mockingbird, A Few Good Men, and The Trial of the Chicago 7 are films with intense court room scenes. We see prosecuting attorneys and defense lawyers seeking to make their case before a judge and jury. One side argues for the guilt of the accused while the other side seeks to prove the individual is not guilty.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 16:19-31), Jesus tells a parable that could inspire a riveting court room scene. We hear about an amazingly rich man who ended up tormented in the fires of hell because of his treatment of Lazarus, the poor man who was at his door.

Abraham, from his place in the heavens, speaks for the prosecution. He tells the rich man, "Remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented."

However, if that rich man had a good lawyer representing him, that defense counsel could argue that his client did nothing to injure Lazarus. He might point out that the rich man did not order Lazarus removed from his door; he allowed Lazarus to remain near the entrance to his home.

The rich man was not deliberately cruel to Lazarus; in fact, he even knew him by name. He did not object to Lazarus seeking scraps that fell from his banquet table. He certainly was not responsible for the sores festering on the body of Lazarus.

That defense lawyer could further argue that there was no proof that the rich man had failed in his religious observances. He might also contend that being wealthy did not make his client guilty of any crime any more than being poor automatically made a person innocent or holy.

However, these defense arguments would be demolished by the prosecution. When the rich man asked that Lazarus be permitted to go and warn his five brothers of their impending doom, Abraham says, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them."

Abraham makes it clear that the law and the prophets speak about care for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. The rich man cannot claim that he did not know of his responsibility to the poor and the suffering at his door, nor can his brothers when they come to be judged.

No matter how a defense attorney might try to defend that rich man, he would not be able to refute the arguments presented by Abraham. The rich man was guilty not because he did something to injure Lazarus but because he did nothing for Lazarus. The rich man simply ignored him. He failed to love his neighbor as commanded by the law and the prophets.

That offense of omission is something that we are reminded of by Jesus in the chapter 25 of Matthew's Gospel. There Jesus tells us that the final judgement will be based on our response to the needs of the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the imprisoned and the hurting.

We are also reminded of that whenever we pray the Confiteor. We confess not only the wrong we have done, but we also confess the good we have failed to do.

As the rich man discovered, doing nothing good for someone in need is just as deserving of punishment as doing something wrong.

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