

## **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, September 30, 2018**

### ***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.

#### **MORE THAN THE FEW**

What people hold positions of power in government?

If we were asked that question, we would probably answer that the president, senators, congressional representatives, and Supreme Court justices hold power in the federal government. On the state level, such authority is held by governors, members of the legislature, and judges.

If we were asked who holds positions of power in the Catholic Church, we would most likely mention the pope, archbishops, bishops, priests, deacons, and persons in certain designated areas of church ministry.

But those answers are only partly correct. When it comes to the government, power is ultimately held not by certain individuals, but by the people. Power is in the hands of the voters. They ultimately determine how the country is governed.

The same is true when it comes to the Church. Power in the Church does not rest only with those with ecclesiastical titles and honors.

We see the idea of power and authority residing with more than just the "expected" in this Sunday's scripture readings.

In the First Reading (Numbers 11:25-29), God takes some of the spirit that he had given to Moses, and bestows it on 70 elders. Filled with the spirit, they begin to prophesy.

When Moses is told that two men, who were not present when the spirit was given, are also speaking prophetic words, he reacts in an unexpected way.

Rather than ordering them to stop as Joshua urges, Moses says, "Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets! Would that the Lord might bestow his spirit on them all!"

Moses wishes that the spirit would come down upon all the Chosen People and not just the few!

We hear something similar in Sunday's Gospel (Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48). There the apostle John tells Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us."

Rather than becoming upset by the report, Jesus tells John to let the man continue driving out evil. "For whoever is not against us is for us."

There is a tendency among the clergy and the laity to think like Joshua and John. To believe that power and authority in the Church are restricted to a certain, closed group. Pope Francis calls this idea "clericalism."

Such clericalism, the Pope says, does tremendous damage for it “tends to diminish and undervalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit has placed in the heart of our people.”  
*(Letter Pope Francis to The People Of God, August 20, 2018)*

“Our first and fundamental consecration is rooted in our Baptism...It does us good to remember that the Church is not an elite of priests, of consecrated men, of bishops, but that everyone forms the faithful Holy People of God.” *(Letter of Pope Francis to Cardinal Marc Ouellet, March 19, 2016)*

Power and authority, like God’s Spirit, are not restricted only to the ordained or only to the few. If we as a Church are to address the scandals and abuse that have disfigured the Body of Christ, we need to step forward and move beyond this “clerical concept” of the Church. As Pope Francis tells us, “To say ‘no’ to abuse is to say an emphatic ‘no’ to all forms of clericalism.”

All the baptized need to take part in renewing and reforming the Church. The Church belongs to us all.

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