

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, October 5, 2014**

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.

## **PAY THE RENT!**

Lately the number of people renting or leasing their residence has increased. Currently about 35% of Americans live in rental units. There are certain advantages to renting. Renters do not have to worry about maintenance and all the responsibilities that come with home ownership, and they can move more easily if their circumstances should change. But of course those who lease have a rental fee that is due each month. Tenants who fail to pay end up being evicted from the place they call home.

This Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 21:33-43) is about a man who leases his property to tenants. The man "planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower." He then leases his vineyard to people from whom he naturally expects rent, in this case, his harvest of grapes.

But when the landowner sends his agents to collect, the tenants refuse to pay and even abuse and kill the owner's servants. This happens not once but twice. The owner then sends his son to collect what is owed. But the tenants still refuse to pay. In fact, they murder the owner's son. They truly are tenants from hell.

Jesus tells that parable to make the chief priests and elders realize they were acting like those tenants. God had given them the care of Israel, the care of his "vineyard," but they were not producing the harvest of righteousness God expected. When God sent them his servants, his prophets, and eventually even his son, to remind them of what God required, those messengers were ignored, abused and even killed.

That parable is not just about the chief priests and elders, it is also about us. We too are tenants. God is the owner who has given us a place in his world and in his Church. While we are here God expects us to be good tenants who pay our "rent." The rent required is a harvest of goodness, mercy, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, and repentance.

Not only does God expect us to pay our rent, God also sends people into our lives to collect it. Those requests for "rent," can come in a variety of ways. They can come in the form of a parish announcement seeking our financial support or volunteers for a particular project. They can come in the form of charitable appeals that we receive in the mail. They can come in the form of neighbors in need and in the images of suffering strangers that we see on television. They can come in the form of homilies and scripture passages that challenge us to confront the sin and selfishness in our lives. We never know when and how God may send someone to request the "rent" that he expects from us.

If, like those in the Gospel, we fail to produce what God expects, we run the risk of being evicted. As Jesus said, "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit." Or to put it another way, "Avoid eviction. Pay the rent!"

