

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, October 7, 2018

The Twenty-Seventh 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.

MESSAGES FOR TODAY

Sometimes the readings at Mass seem more suited to another age. They appear to have little to offer us.

That certainly seems to be the case with this Sunday's First Reading and Gospel.

In the First Reading (Genesis 2:18-24), we hear that God created the "wild animals and various birds of the air" so that the first human might not be alone. But when they did not provide the company the man needed, God created a woman. God made a "suitable partner" for the man.

A nice story, but what relevance does it have? To believe what the reading says, we would have to disregard science. We would have to become biblical fundamentalists.

Then in the Gospel (Mark 10:2-16), Jesus speaks about the permanence of marriage and condemns divorce. But in a society where more than 40% of first marriages and more than 65% of second marriages end in divorce, where any kind of permanent commitment seems to be avoided, and where a hook-up culture puts little value on sexual activity beyond pleasure, the words of Jesus seem quaint and outdated.

But if the scriptures contain God's eternal word for every age, then this Sunday's readings must contain a message for us today.

The First Reading about God making a partner for man is not meant to teach us about creation. Rather it is meant to teach us about ourselves.

In that reading we learn that we were created with a need for relationship and connection, with a need for community.

We were not made to be isolated, disconnected, self-centered individuals. As God tells us, "It is not good for the man to be alone." Just as hunger pains tell us that we need to eat, so pangs of loneliness remind us of our need for human relationships.

The most intimate of such life-giving relationships is the union of man and woman in marriage. "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh."

In the Gospel, Jesus speaks about that marriage relationship. It is not to be broken. A man who leaves his wife for another woman, and a woman who leaves her husband for another man, are each guilty of adultery.

Both husband and wife have an obligation to remain faithful. "What God has joined together, no human being must separate."

In those words, Jesus sets the ideal before us, just as he does throughout the scriptures. Ideally, we are to forgive our enemies, to serve the poor and powerless, to love others as he did, to turn away from sin, and to have absolute faith and trust in God.

Yet we all fall short. Ideals are not always reached. In fact, in marriages where there is physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, striving for the ideal of permanence may not be “ideal” at all.

That does not mean that the ideals the Lord presents are to be ignored. Perhaps the increasing problems in our society are caused by so many people no longer striving for the ideal.

This Sunday’s readings do have a message for us. They tell us we are made for one another and made to reach for the ideals that God has set before us.

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