

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, October 12, 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.

A DECIDING FACTOR

Whenever we receive an invitation to a wedding, a graduation, or to some other social event, we are faced with a decision. Do we accept or do we decline? In making that decision we consider such things as who invited us, our relationship to the person or persons being honored, our availability, the travel arrangements that might be necessary, the costs involved, and so on.

But there is another factor that we consider, one that we might not so readily acknowledge. That factor is simply this: Is it to our advantage to attend? For example, if we were to receive an invitation to the wedding of our employer's daughter, it certainly would seem wise to accept. Being present might give us a chance to strengthen our relationship with our employer. Declining such an invitation would certainly not score us any points with our boss and it might be taken as an insult.

The same kind of consideration certainly takes place when those doing business with a city receive an invitation to a political fundraiser or when local politicians are invited to attend the installation of a new pastor. It certainly is advantageous for business people and politicians to accept such invitations, especially if they hope to continue their relationship with the city or to win re-election.

In Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 22:1-10), Jesus tells a parable about a king who extends an invitation to people to attend the wedding banquet of his son. When they are summoned, the invited guests refuse to come. In fact they refuse not once but twice. They even go so far as to mistreat and kill the servants sent by the king to escort them to the banquet. Those summoned could not have more emphatically declined the invitation of the king.

Obviously those invited saw no advantage in accepting the king's invitation to the wedding banquet of his son. They had no love for the king, no respect for his position, no regard for his power, no sense that a good relationship with the king was to their benefit.

That parable was initially directed to the chief priests and elders of the people who had refused the invitation of Jesus to have a place in the kingdom. They saw no advantage in accepting his invitation to repent and to embrace the message of the Gospel. That being the case the invitation was extended to others. Jesus acted like the king in the parable who told his servants, "Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find."

Today, the situation is not much different. Through the Sacrament of Baptism God has invited people to have a place in his kingdom and eventually a place at his heavenly banquet. But many of those invited decline the invitation or walk away. Caught up in a materialistic, pleasure-seeking, narcissistic, self-centered society, they are blind to the fullness of life that can be found in a relationship with Christ and His Church.

Invitations, even those from the Lord, are evaluated in light of the benefits we think they may bring.

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