

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, October 18, 2015

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 RANSOM FOR THE MANY

Some words of Jesus are easier to understand than others. We have an example of that in this Sunday's Gospel (Mark 10:35-45). There Jesus says, "For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for the many."

Jesus' words about coming to serve are readily understandable. Even non-Christians know that Jesus did not come to be waited upon by his followers. Rather, Jesus humbly served others. He healed the sick. He fed the hungry. He embraced the outcast. He offered forgiveness to the sinner. He proclaimed to all people that God's kingdom of love, justice, and peace was breaking into this world. His ministry of service was dramatically illustrated when he stooped to wash the feet of his disciples.

However the words, "to give his life as a ransom for the many," are not so readily understood. From what did Jesus ransom the many? What was holding them in its power?

We might suppose that Jesus ransomed us from the power of the devil, the power of darkness and death. Yet if that were so, it would seem to imply that evil was able to overcome good and could snatch us out of the hand of God.

Or perhaps Jesus ransomed us from the wrath of God that humanity incurred when it rebelled against God. We sinned, and the justice of God demanded satisfaction. But that idea seems to be contradicted by the image of the forgiving father found in the parable of the prodigal son. There the father demands no payment, no penance, to welcome back his wayward son.

Perhaps what Jesus did was to ransom us from ourselves. He ransomed us from our false ideas and misconceptions about ourselves, about others, and about God.

We see Jesus doing just that in Sunday's Gospel as he "ransoms" John and James from the false idea that had taken hold of them – the idea that greatness was to be found in power and position. Instead, Jesus tells them, "whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all."

Jesus ransoms us from the lies, the erroneous beliefs, the half-truths, the warped values that have tried to enslave humanity from the time of Adam and Eve.

Jesus gave his life "as a ransom for the many." He gave his life that we might know the truth and the truth would set us free.

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