

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, October 26, 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.

THEY ALL HEARD

There were Christians involved in the slave trade, involved with transporting and selling African men, women, and children as if they were property.

There were Christians in Europe who passively watched as their Jewish neighbors slowly disappeared during the 1930s and 40s during the time the Nazis were in power.

There were Christians involved in the ethnic cleansings that took place in Bosnia and in the genocide that occurred in Rwanda during the 1990s.

Yet those Christians all heard the words of Jesus, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments." Words that we will hear as the Gospel (Matthew 22:34-40) is read this Sunday.

That Gospel will be heard by Christians who gain substantial commissions by recommending financial products that put their clients at high risk of losing their money.

That Gospel will be heard by Christians who exploit foreign workers, pay them below minimum wage, and threaten them with deportation if they complain.

That Gospel will be heard by Christians who close their eyes to the cruelty, violence, and suffering that affect so many innocent people today that Pope Francis has said we are the midst of a Third World War but one spread out piecemeal across the globe.

How is it that Christians can live as if Jesus never said, *"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments"*?

Perhaps that can happen because when we hear the Gospel we often hear what we want to hear, and in the way we want to hear it, and then we are deaf to those words that challenge and indict our way of living.

We hear Jesus speak of loving God with all our being and we decide that we fulfill that command by going to Sunday Mass. We think that love of God merely means being at an act of worship some sixty minutes a week. Pray and sing, kneel and stand, and then go and live in the real world as society demands.

We hear Jesus speak of loving our neighbor as ourselves, and we decide what people fit that category. Neighbors are the kind of people we like living near us, playing with our children, inviting us to their social gatherings, and agreeing with our politics.

Yet the Lord who told us that we are to love God and to love our neighbor did not just speak those words, he lived those words. He showed us how those words were to be understood and interpreted.

For Jesus, loving God meant making the Father's will the guide for his life. "Not my will but yours be done." (Luke 22:42) God showed the way, Jesus followed.

Loving his neighbors meant associating with the outcast, the powerless, the sinner. It meant seeing those that society ignored and discarded with the eyes of the God who made them.

As we hear the words of Jesus this Sunday, we should not be too quick to assume we are following them. If we were, our world would be a far better place!

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