

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, November 2, 2014**

## **The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed**

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.

### **DEATH AND TAXES**

"In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." That sentiment was expressed in a letter written by Benjamin Franklin, the great American statesman, in 1789.

When it comes to those two certainties, one is spoken about a great deal while the other is usually avoided.

Taxes are a reality which confronts us daily. We are faced with sales tax, property tax, income tax, social security tax, inheritance tax, gas tax, school tax, and countless fees that are just taxes in disguise. We pay those taxes, complain about our increasing tax rate, and listen with skepticism as politicians promise to cut our tax burden. Taxes are a subject about which we all have an opinion.

The other certainty, death, is not so widely discussed. Our society tends to avoid the subject and the reality of death as much as it can. If people do talk about it, they often avoid saying someone died. Rather, "She passed on." "He went to a better place." "They are no longer with us."

Funerals are called "celebrations of life" and their duration is shortened as much as possible. Wakes, which would go on for two or three days some 40 years ago, are now often limited to a few hours. Direct cremation is sometimes chosen so the bereaved do not have to confront a dead body. Children are so sheltered from the reality of death that there are young adults who have never visited a funeral home.

Today the ever increasing ranks of cosmetic surgeons promise to remove signs of aging so that when we look in the mirror we are not reminded that death creeps closer day by day.

While a certainty, death is not a frequent topic in society. However that is not true in the Catholic Church. As a Church we might not do much talking about taxes but we do talk about death.

In fact, each November 2, we have a day that particularly focuses our attention on death and those who have died. We celebrate the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. A commemoration so important that it replaces the normal prayers and readings when it falls on a Sunday as it does this year.

We as Christians can talk about death because we do not see it as an utter annihilation that says that human life, human love, human effort, and human goodness mean nothing for they end in nothingness.

Rather we believe something very different. We believe that life has meaning, purpose, and a future beyond the final beat of our heart.

We believe that Jesus, by his loving faithfulness to the Father, restored the relationship between God and humanity broken by sin and manifested by death. The passion and death of Jesus was his loving Yes to God, and the Resurrection was God's Yes to Jesus. There was now a new relationship, a new covenant, between God and his people.

We view death as a further invitation from God to that new relationship we have with him because of Jesus Christ, a relationship that also includes all our deceased relatives, friends, and fellow Christians. That is why the Church proclaims in its funeral liturgy, "We believe that all the ties of friendship and affection which knit us as one throughout our lives do not unravel with death." (Order of Christian Funerals, #71)

This Sunday, and every Sunday, we can pray for those who have died and in doing so we can face the certainty of our own death, because we believe that relationships continue, that life continues. As Jesus says in this Sunday's Gospel (John 6:37-40), "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life."

Faced with the certainty of taxes, we complain and pay them. Faced with the certainty of death, we proclaim, "I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen."

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***Please Note: Other Gospel Readings, other than the one cited, may be used this Sunday, November 2, The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed.***