

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, November 3, 2019

The Thirty-First 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.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than ten years.

TOUCHED BY GRACE

When someone does something unexpected, we look for reasons to explain why that person acted as he or she did.

That question might come to mind when we hear this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 19:1-10) about Zacchaeus, the despised tax collector of Jericho who is described as "short in stature."

When Jesus comes to Jericho, Zacchaeus does something completely unexpected and out of character for a tax collector or any government official. He climbs a tree. He literally goes out on a limb to get above the crowd in order to get a glimpse of Jesus.

What motivated Zacchaeus to do what he did?

We might imagine that Zacchaeus was motivated by curiosity; he wanted to see the healer and preacher that everyone was talking about. We might suppose that Zacchaeus was looking for something more in life, something that his wealth could not provide. Perhaps, he thought, he might find what he was seeking in the message of Jesus.

While those motivations might explain the action of Zacchaeus, perhaps the underlying reason that got him up a tree was this: Zacchaeus was touched by God's grace. God was working in the life of Zacchaeus. If that had not been the case, Zacchaeus would have remained at home.

We also see the grace of God, the outreach of God, when Jesus looks up, sees Zacchaeus and says, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house."

Obviously, there were many people lining the road that day to see Jesus. And perhaps Zacchaeus was not the only one who had climbed a tree to get a better view of the celebrity passing through town.

But Jesus focused his attention on Zacchaeus and chose to invite himself to his house. Again, Zacchaeus was touched by the grace of God.

That divine grace, that touch of God, also did something more. That moment of mercy empowered Zacchaeus to change. As he said, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over."

After that declaration, Jesus announced what had taken place. God's grace had touched Zacchaeus. As Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house."

The unexpected actions of Zacchaeus were ultimately motivated by the grace and touch of God. Zacchaeus may have had his reasons, but those reasons were brought to his mind by the Lord.

This Sunday, we will not climb a tree to see Jesus. But we will leave our homes and gather with our fellow Christians to “see” Jesus as he speaks to us in his Word and feeds us at his Holy Table.

While we could give reasons to explain our presence at Mass this Sunday, the underlying reason is the same as the one that motivated Zacchaeus. We have been touched by the grace of God.

2019 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski