

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, November 4, 2018

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.

MORE THAN BY FEELINGS

We often judge the state of our health by how we are feeling at the moment. Do I feel well? Do I feel sick?

However, that is not always the best indicator of our health, for we can feel perfectly fine, and yet have an underlying health problem. For example, a person with high blood pressure is often unaware of the condition. That is why elevated blood pressure is often referred to as the "silent killer."

If we really want to know the status of our health, we need to undergo a thorough physical examination. During such an exam, the doctor will check our reflexes, blood pressure, pulse, oxygen level, and listen to our heart and lungs.

The doctor will order blood and urine tests to check for diabetes, high cholesterol, anemia, and other diseases. The doctor will take an EKG, and depending on the results, he or she may prescribe a stress test. Other scans, tests, and x-rays may also be part of a physical.

After learning the results from our doctor, we may discover that we are not as healthy as we thought. Feeling healthy does not always mean we are healthy.

That is equally true in our spiritual lives.

If someone were to ask us, or any Christian for that matter, if we kept the first commandment mentioned by Jesus in this Sunday's Gospel (Mark 12:28-34), we would say, "YES."

In that Gospel, when Jesus is asked, "Which is the first of all the commandments?", he replies with the words found in Sunday's First Reading (Deuteronomy 6:2-6). Those words, which are an essential part of Jewish prayer, command believers to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Certainly, we all feel that we are striving to do that.

However, feeling we love God might not indicate the true state of our relationship with God. After calling upon people to love God, Jesus goes on to say, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." We might say Jesus gives us the second half of that first commandment.

Jesus tells us that love for God must be seen in our love for our neighbor. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus makes it clear by his example that love of neighbor is not a matter of warm feelings, but a matter of care, compassion, and assistance shown to those in need.

If we want to know the true state of our love for God, we need to go by more than just our feelings, we need to examine our response to the poor and hurting who cross our path and come to our attention. We need to consider if we are showing them, at least to some degree, the care and attention we give so readily to ourselves.

We cannot just go by our feelings to determine our state of health. And we cannot go only by our feelings to determine if we are truly loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. That takes an examination; it takes an honest assessment of how we are treating our neighbor.

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