

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, November 5, 2017

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

JUDGING OUR LEADERS

Anyone who holds a position of authority, a position of leadership, is continually being judged.

A school principal is judged by the faculty, students and parents, and by the Board of Education.

A corporate executive is evaluated by the stockholders, middle managers, and employees.

A government official is judged by the voters, the press, and ultimately by history.

All these evaluations are based on people's perception and understanding of how those leaders should be acting.

Our three scripture readings this Sunday focus our attention on people in positions of religious authority.

In our First Reading (Malachi 1:14-2:2, 8-10), the Lord condemns the priests of Israel. They are judged "contemptible and base" leaders. Instead of leading people in the ways of the covenant, God says of them, "you have caused many to falter by your instruction."

Then in the Gospel (Matthew 23:1-12), Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees. They were leaders who were preaching but not putting their own words into practice. They were making a display of their piety to gain public approval and respect. They were exalting themselves.

In contrast to such leaders, in our Second Reading (1 Thessalonians 2:7-9, 13) as Paul speaks of himself, we learn what makes a good religious leader. Paul humbles himself, even working to support himself so as not to be a financial burden to others. He describes his concern for the Christians at Thessalonica as that of a gentle, nursing mother caring for her children. Paul is a person of humility, love and integrity. He lives the Gospel he preaches. He is a leader who models himself after the one he serves, Jesus Christ.

Sunday's readings focus on religious leaders. Such leaders, like all those in positions of authority, are always being judged. Whether we voice our judgments or keep them to ourselves, all of us judge our bishops, pastors, priests, and deacons.

Our judgments need to be tempered with mercy and compassion.

Those we judge to be like the priests of Israel and like the scribes and Pharisees need our correction but just as importantly our prayers and encouragement.

And those we judge to be like Saint Paul, those we see doing their best to serve us and God's Church, also need our prayers and encouragement and just as importantly our words of thanks and gratitude.

As we judge our Church leaders we need to remember that there was only one perfect leader – Jesus Christ. All the rest fall short.

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