

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, November 18, 2018

The Thirty-Third 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.

MOST NEAR US

When have you most felt the presence of God in your life?

If we were asked that question, we might respond by mentioning a certain moment of personal prayer, a particularly inspiring liturgy, a time of retreat, the birth of a child, an instance of creativity, or the sight of an amazing part of God's creation.

We all have moments when God seems particularly present, but there are also moments when God seems to be absent. We sometimes feel that God has abandoned us when a family member or friend dies in a tragic accident, when a doctor gives us a devastating diagnosis, when we lose a job, when a relationship collapses, or when we are hurt by malicious lies and gossip.

This Sunday's Gospel (Mark 13:24-32) may offer us a different perspective.

In this Gospel, Jesus speaks about the days when "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken." While those images call to mind the end of time, they can also apply to our own lives.

We all have occasions when our personal world is shaken, when things seem to be falling apart, and when sadness and pain darkened the joy of living.

Yet on those occasions, the Lord may not be absent but rather most near us. Jesus tells us to "learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates."

When our personal lives are in turmoil, we need to realize that God is at our gates.

That was certainly the case for Jesus that first Holy Thursday evening. When the world was crashing down around him as his betrayer led the mob to arrest him, Jesus realized that he was not alone. God was with him. Then "to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him." (Luke 22:43).

We have a God who is always with us, but particularly so in our moments of pain and sorrow. Just as true friends stand by us not just in the joys of life but also in its sorrows, God, our truest friend, does the same.

We need to remember that when our lives are falling apart, that the Lord comes even closer to us. To use the image of our Gospel, he comes to "gather his elect" into the embrace of love.

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