

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, December 29, 2013

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.

THE PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

What is the most important responsibility of parents? It's a good question and one that can elicit a variety of answers. But perhaps the best answer is simply this, "The most important responsibility parents have is to protect their children."

Parents have an obligation to protect their children from anything or anyone that can hurt them or endanger their well being. This includes shielding their children from hunger, homelessness, and disease and protecting them from any person who might cause them physical or psychological harm.

Parents have a duty to protect their children. If they do not do that, anything else they do for their children will be of little consequence.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23) for the Feast of the Holy Family, we see Joseph fulfilling that primary parental responsibility. He protects the child Jesus from danger.

In that Gospel, Joseph is warned in a dream that he should flee from Bethlehem since King Herod is determined to kill the child whom the magi had proclaimed was "the newborn king of the Jews." So Joseph leaves the people and the country he knows and takes Mary and Jesus into the land of Egypt. Without hesitation, Joseph does what is necessary to protect the child he has accepted as his son and becomes a refugee in a foreign land.

When Herod dies, Joseph brings his family back from Egypt to Israel. However, when he learns that Herod's son, Archelaus, is now on the throne, Joseph senses a new threat to the child Jesus. So rather than returning to Judea and Bethlehem, Joseph goes instead to Galilee to the town of Nazareth.

Joseph makes whatever moves are necessary to protect his child. Parents today have the same responsibility to protect their children. But in our day children are in danger from different kinds of "Herods." These "Herods" not only threaten their physical well being but their spirits as well.

The media assaults the eyes of children with images of violence and cruelty that lessen their sensitively to the pain and suffering of others.

Advertising makes children into materialistic consumers who must always have something more, something better, something that promises them status in the eyes of others.

An increasingly secular society shoves God, religion, and spiritual values out of everyday life. In doing so it deadens the spiritual side of children who are naturally open to the wonder of God and his creation.

The entertainment industry and its celebrity idols teach children behavior that degrades sexual intimacy, mocks family relationships, and scorns standards of decency and morality.

Organized sports and other scheduled activities for children take over the time once given to the worship of God, to religious education, and to family interaction. Children learn that what takes place on the field is more valued than what takes place at the table of the Lord or at the family table.

This Sunday's Gospel reminds us that Joseph did what was necessary to protect the child Jesus from the Herod of his day. Joseph fulfilled his primary responsibility as a good parent.

Today, Christian parents need to do the same. They need to do whatever is required to protect their children from the "Herods" of our day.

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Best Wishes for a Joyful Christmas Season!