

LOOKING TO SUNDAY™

Sunday, January 17, 2010

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.

SIGN LANGUAGE

All of us know more "sign language" than we may realize.

When someone holds up a hand with the palm facing out, we know that means stop. A fist with the thumb pointing upward means good job or approval while a fist with the thumb downward means just the opposite.

A flashing yellow light means drive with extra caution. A double white line down a highway means no passing.

A flag flying at half mast is a sign of mourning. Flying a flag upside down is an international signal of distress.

In every case, it is not enough to see the sign; we have to understand its meaning.

This Sunday's Gospel (John 2: 1-11) relates how Jesus changed more than 120 gallons of water into wine during the marriage feast of Cana. In doing so, Jesus responded to the request of his mother, who brought the matter to his attention. Jesus saved the groom and his family from an embarrassing situation. And Jesus performed his first miracle recorded in the Gospel of John. Yet John calls that action not a miracle but a sign. That tells us that something more is meant by that action.

Changing water into wine was a sign that the water used for Jewish ritual purifications was being replaced by something else. In Jesus, a new covenant was in the making between God and His people. Jesus would be the way to God, not ritual actions.

Changing water into wine was a sign that Jesus was the one who could transform the ordinary into something more. Following Jesus would give human life a deeper meaning, purpose, joy, and fulfillment.

Changing water into wine revealed the identity of Jesus. It signified his divine power and glory. As John writes, "Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him." (John 2:11)

Changing water into wine was, and remains, a sign that needs not just to be seen but to be understood. For that to happen, we need to know the "sign language" of this Sunday's Gospel.

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