

## ***LOOKING TO SUNDAY®***

**Sunday, February 3, 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.

### **UPWARD MOBILITY?**

What do you want to be when you grow up? In response to that question, children will give a variety of answers – a firefighter, a teacher, a chef, a doctor, etc. Those answers tend to change over time as children consider other possibilities and are exposed to new careers and professions.

Once people do enter a certain field, the odds are great that they will change professions in the future. It is increasingly rare that people remain in the same job for their entire working career. A person might begin working as a financial analyst and twenty years later might be teaching high school math.

Things were very different in the time of Jesus. Children did not see options before them as they considered their future. Society was stratified and static. The social class and position into which a person was born was the class and position in which that person remained. The job of the father became the job of the son. The job of the mother became the job of the daughter. If a boy was born to a farmer, he would become a farmer. If a girl were born to a cook, she would become a cook like her mother.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 4:21-30), we read how Jesus upset the societal norm that dictated that a person's place in society was determined by birth. Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth and preached in the synagogue and "all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth."

But then that praise quickly turned to criticism and hostility as the people asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" Who was this Jesus, this son of the local carpenter, to be preaching to them and declaring that, as we heard in last Sunday's Gospel, he was the one anointed by the Spirit to proclaim God's saving message. The son of a carpenter could only be a carpenter. A resident of Nazareth could not set himself above his neighbors.

Jesus, in addition to assuming the role of prophet and teacher, also had the audacity to declare that his ministry would embrace all people. He would be like Elijah, who stayed with a pagan widow in the land of Sidon, and like Elisha, who healed a Syrian leper. For the Jews who saw themselves as chosen and loved by God and saw all others as beyond God's care, this shattered their view of the world. Jesus not only moved beyond his set place in the village, he was breaking the boundaries that separated Jew from Gentile. It was for these reasons the people "were all filled with fury...and drove him out of the town."

There is good news for us in this Sunday's Gospel. It proclaims that with the strength of the Spirit we receive at Baptism, like Jesus, we can move beyond where we are in life and become the more holy and loving people God calls us to be. In our spiritual life, we are not locked into a

certain level of goodness. In our spiritual life there is always the opportunity for upward mobility. There is always the chance to become something more!

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