

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, June 5, 2016

The Tenth 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.

HEART NOT HEAD

If we had to choose one symbol to display in our church this coming weekend, we might select a heart. The weekend is full of "heart."

It is the first weekend of June, a month traditionally associated with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Just as the month of May is associated with the Blessed Mother, and November with prayers for the deceased, so the month of June is traditionally associated with devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Furthermore, this coming Friday, June 3, is the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. During the Mass for that feast day the Church will "recall the wonder of his love for us."

This Sunday's Gospel (John 7:11-16), gives us another reason we might select a heart as this weekend's symbol. In that Gospel we read how Jesus and his followers encounter a funeral procession carrying the body of a dead man out of the city of Nain. The man is described as "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow."

Jesus halts the funeral procession. He then addresses the dead man, "Young man, I tell you arise!" And to the amazement of all, the dead man sits up. He is restored to life and returned to his mother. A mother whose bitter tears are washed away in a flood of joy.

Jesus acts as he does not because he is asked to do something by a grieving parent, as in the case of Jairus and his daughter. (Luke 8:40-56)

Not because he knows the dead man and his distraught relatives, as in the case of Lazarus. (John 11:1-44)

Not because he wants to use the occasion to confound his opponents, as in case of the paralytic whose sins he forgives and whose body he makes whole. (Mark 2:1-12)

And not because he wants to reinforce his words with a miraculous sign, as in the case of feeding five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. (Luke 9:11-17)

Jesus is motivated to act for another reason. As Luke tells us, "When the Lord saw her (the mother), he was moved with pity for her."

Jesus sees a woman who has already buried her husband and now she is burying her only son. In the patriarchal society of her day that meant she was losing not only the child who loved her, but the one who provided for her needs and was her source of security and comfort.

Witnessing the grief and sorrow before him, and perhaps seeing a glimpse of the future that might await his own mother, Jesus acts on the impulse of his heart. He does something to change the situation.

Seeing Jesus being led by his heart serves as a good example for us. In our lives we often come across situations that tug at our hearts.

We receive solicitations in the mail describing the plight of Syrian refugees fleeing war or containing pictures of malnourished children in Haiti and the Sudan. We hear an appeal at Mass from a dedicated woman assisting unwed, pregnant mothers so they might choose life. We hear news reports of Christians being executed for their faith. We notice an elderly neighbor struggling to care for the outside of her home.

Our hearts move us to do something, but that impulse is often negated by our heads. We start to think, what difference would my donation really make? Shouldn't people suffer the consequences of their decisions? Aren't there social and charitable institutions, and governmental agencies to deal with these issues? If I help, won't I just be asked again and again?

Our heads take over, our hearts lose, and we do nothing.

If Jesus had let that happen, the widow would have gone away from her son's grave – devastated, alone, and destitute.

In fact, if Jesus had not let his heart rule, we would still be lost in sin and not saved by his cross and resurrection.

This Sunday we are reminded that like Jesus, we should “go with the heart!”

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