

## ***LOOKING TO SUNDAY®***

**Sunday, July 29, 2012**

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.

### **LEFTOVERS**

Wedding banquets, testimonial dinners, school lunch programs, buffet suppers, fundraising pancake breakfasts, and other occasions when food is prepared for a number of people, all result in leftovers. Food always seems to remain after everyone has eaten. While some of that food is saved for the next day or taken home by some people, much of the food is discarded. In fact, the Department of Environmental Protection estimates that we Americans threw away 33 million tons of food in 2010.

In this Sunday's Gospel (John 6:1-15), Jesus deals with leftovers. In that Gospel, Jesus is concerned about feeding the large crowd of people that have gathered to hear him. So Jesus takes five barley loaves and two fish, which are given to him by a boy in the crowd, he blesses them and then distributes them to the crowd. Miraculously, all are fed. Food from one boy becomes food for 5,000 men.

As usually happens when a large group of people are fed, there are leftovers. In response Jesus tells his disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted." The gathered leftovers fill 12 wicker baskets.

Were those leftovers of concern to Jesus because they were the result of a miracle so wondrous that it is the only miracle recorded in each of the four Gospels? Very likely. But perhaps there were other reasons. Food was not to be wasted. Jesus was part of a society where obtaining enough food for oneself and one's family was a daily challenge. Furthermore, food, whether divinely multiplied or a result of natural processes, was seen as a gift from God to be revered. Wheat grew, trees bore fruit, animals provided nourishment, and seeds became life sustaining crops, because God, the creator, was at work.

But maybe there was another reason. Throughout the Gospel Jesus seems to be concerned about leftovers. He was concerned that leftover food not be discarded, and he was even more concerned about human "leftovers" as well. They were the persons that society readily disregarded and discarded as "leftovers" – the lepers, the unclean, the crippled, the blind, the prostitutes, the poor, the powerless, the widows, the orphans, the sinners. Jesus came to gather them to himself and bring them into God's embrace.

How we treat leftovers, whether they are the kind that remain on our tables or that walk among us in society, reveals a great deal about our reverence for God's creation and our reverence for God's children. Jesus it seems saw nothing, saw no one, without value. Everything, everyone, was worth saving!

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