

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, August 14, 2011

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.

WHAT A PARENT DOES

Most people would not put themselves into a situation where they were ignored, scorned, and humiliated. Yet that is exactly what a woman does in this Sunday's Gospel. (Matthew 15:21-28) A woman, a Gentile, comes to Jesus seeking help for her demon-possessed daughter. "Have pity on me Lord," she cries out. In response, Jesus says nothing. He is silent.

Imagine how that woman must have felt as she was publically ignored. Even more, she had shamed herself by breaking a taboo of her day. She had interacted with a man who was not her husband or relative. Not only that, she had been shouting out in the street for that man's help. As the disciples told Jesus, "Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us."

Despite being ignored, the woman approaches Jesus again. "Lord, help me." This time Jesus speaks to her, saying it is not fitting for him to be concerned with the plea of a Gentile, of a "dog" like her. His concern is only for his own people. The response she received was humiliating to say the least.

Yet she tries for a third time to win Jesus over, pointing out that "even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." With that, Jesus praises her faith, grants her request, and extends his ministry to Gentile, as well as Jew.

What was it that drove that woman to keep coming to Jesus despite scorn and rejection? Certainly it was her faith. Jesus himself said as much, "O woman, great is your faith." Yet it was also something else. It was her love and concern for her suffering daughter. Loving mothers and fathers willingly make any sacrifice, willingly suffer any humiliation, scorn, or embarrassment if that might save the life of their child.

And that is what God does for the sake of his children! In Jesus Christ, God comes to free his people from being possessed by sin and death, and brings them into a life-giving relationship with him. God comes even though he is ignored, scorned, and humiliated by his creatures. He even endures the humiliation of the cross. As we read in the Letter to the Philippians, "He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross."
(Philippians 2:6-8)

Most people would not put themselves into a situation where they were ignored, scorned, belittled, and humiliated. But as we see in Sunday's Gospel, that is what a parent does for the sake of her child, and that is what God does for his children! That is what God has done for us.

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