

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, August 28, 2016

The Twenty Second 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.

DESERVING, UNDESERVING

"I deserve it!"

We all have met people who have a sense of self-importance, who feel they deserve special treatment and consideration.

There are the children of high-ranking government officials who feel they deserve more leeway from the local police than the average citizen.

There are sports and media celebrities who imagine they deserve the best tables in restaurants and the impossible-to-get tickets to Broadway shows.

And there are the people with their shopping carts loaded with groceries standing in the express line because they think they deserve to get out quickly.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 14:7-14), Jesus observes individuals who are vying for places of honor at a dinner party. They feel they deserve those privileged places since in their minds they are more important than the other guests who have been invited.

In response to what he sees, Jesus tells a parable that indicates we are not to judge our status and importance in relationship to other people.

Using the example of a wedding banquet, Jesus says, "When you are invited, go and take the lowest place." By humbling ourselves we take ourselves out of the rating game and we acknowledge that the place we think we deserve may not fit the estimation of our host, or the estimation of God. As Jesus says, "Every one who exalts himself will be humbled."

In Sunday's Gospel, Jesus also speaks of the kind of people we should invite to our "banquets." He tells us not to invite those we think are deserving, namely, friends, relatives, and wealthy neighbors. Rather Jesus says, "When you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind."

Jesus tells us to invite the people who can do nothing to advance our place in society. The people we might consider unworthy of our time and attention.

In other words, Jesus tells us to reach out to the same kind of people that he was concerned about in his ministry and whom he continues to invite to his table Sunday after Sunday. Jesus invites undeserving people crippled by selfishness and sin. He invites us.

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus confronts us with realization that we might not be so good and deserving of God's love as we might think.

At the same time, Jesus dares us to see that those we consider undeserving of our attention are precisely the ones we need to invite into the embrace of our care and concern. "Blessed indeed

will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Those we think of as deserving and those God places in that category are not always the same!

© 2016 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski