

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, September 25, 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.

PARTIAL CREDIT

Imagine taking an American history test where there was a question with two parts. The question read, "What U.S. president said 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country' and on what occasion did that president deliver those words?"

This correct answer is: President John F. Kennedy said those words, and he spoke them at his inauguration as president in 1961. If you were able to correctly answer only part of the question, perhaps you knew the words were spoken by President Kennedy but you did not know the occasion, you might ask your teacher if you could receive partial credit. After all, you got the question half right.

Some teachers would say no to your request while others might give you partial credit if you answered only the first or second part correctly.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 21:28-32), Jesus tells a parable about two sons, who each get things only half right. In that parable, a father approaches his two sons and tells them to go and work in the vineyard. The first says no, but later changes his mind and does what his father asked. The second son tells his father he will go, but reconsiders, and does not.

Each son was wrong. The first son defiantly refused his father. An egregious thing to do in the patriarchal society of Jesus' day, where a father was king. Children did not refuse their father. The second son broke his word to his father. That son proved unfaithful and unreliable.

Each son did something wrong, but we can also conclude each son also did something right. The first son did eventually go and do the right thing, he did what the father asked. And the second son said the right thing, he did not verbally defy his father.

Neither son was perfect. In fact, if you think about it there has only been one perfect son in all of human history. Jesus Christ, the perfect son of God, who spoke the words the Father wanted to hear, and who performed the work that his Father sent him to do.

Like the two sons in the Gospel, we are not perfect. We do not always say and do the things we should.

Let's hope that God is like a teacher who is willing to give us partial credit for getting things half right!

© 2011 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski