

LOOKING TO SUNDAY™

Sunday, October 24, 2010

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.

STANDARDIZED TEST

Today, standardized tests are very common in schools. The results of such tests are often used to show how students are doing in comparison to their peers. For example, a student who scores in the 70th percentile is doing better than 70% of his or her peers, while 30% of that student's colleagues are doing superior work.

But it is not only tests that let students know how they are performing in comparison to others in their class. There are grades, rankings, admissions to honor programs, and acceptances to institutions of higher learning.

But comparisons to others do not end with one's academic career. They continue throughout life. This Sunday's Gospel (Luke 18:9-14) is about a person comparing himself to others.

A Pharisee goes to the Temple to pray. In his prayer, he thanks God that in comparison to most people he ranks high indeed on the standard test of good religious practice. He fasts and tithes far more than required. He is doing far better than the nearby tax collector who "beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.'"

That Pharisee was criticized by Jesus not because he said anything that was not true. The Pharisee was correct in saying he was "not like the rest of humanity – greedy, dishonest, adulterous – or even like this tax collector." However, the Pharisee was not correct in comparing himself to the tax collector or to anyone else for that matter.

God does not want us to rank ourselves in comparison to others. God wants each of us to examine our own life in terms of the abilities, blessings, and opportunities God gives us and in light of God's continuing call to us to turn from sin and to grow in holiness.

Like the Pharisee, each one of us can look good if we position ourselves next to the right people. However, if we stand before God and then look at ourselves, the words of the tax collector will be on our lips 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.'

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