

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, January 8, 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.

REVEALING GIFTS

You can learn something about a person by considering the Christmas gifts that person gives. For example, by looking at the number and kind of gifts a person bestows you might learn if the person is generous, if the person takes time to select gifts to suit each recipient, and how many people have a special place in that person's heart.

You can also learn something about a person by considering the Christmas gifts that person receives. If you saw a person with many gifts, you might conclude the person is friendly and outgoing, or perhaps comes from a large family. You might think just the opposite if that person only received a gift or two at Christmas.

If the person received very expensive gifts, you might think the person was in an upper income bracket or perhaps held an influential office and be might open to looking kindly upon the giver of a generous gift.

If the person received gifts all with a certain theme you might guess something about the person's interests. For example, if a person received gifts of spirit wear from Notre Dame University, you might guess the person was a graduate or a fan of the Fighting Irish. If the person received gifts cards to fine area restaurants, you might guess the person was a connoisseur of good food or just hated to cook. Gifts can be revealing.

In this Sunday's Gospel for the Epiphany of the Lord (Matthew 2:1-12), magi from the east come to Jerusalem searching for "the newborn king of the Jews." The magi are directed to Bethlehem and there they find the one they are seeking. They present the child Jesus with "gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

Those gifts not only tell us of the generosity of the magi, they also tell us something about the recipient.

The gift of gold, a gift fit for a king, reveals the royal status of the child. He was far more than just "the newborn king of the Jews." He was the one who eventually would be acclaimed Christ the King of all creation!

The gift of frankincense, used in religious worship, points to the divine nature of the one who would be recognized as the Son of the Father and the Savior of the world. As the centurion would proclaim on Good Friday, "Truly, this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

The gift of myrrh, used to ease pain and to care for the bodies of the dead, foreshadows the suffering and death that awaited this child. In the Gospels, Jesus is offered wine drugged with myrrh to ease the pain of crucifixion (Mark 15:23) and Nicodemus brings a mixture of myrrh and aloes to care for the dead body of Jesus (John 19:39).

The three gifts given by the magi were not just meant for the child Jesus. They were also given so that we might have an "epiphany," so that we might have a better insight into the child born that first Christmas night. Gifts can be revealing!

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