

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, February 5, 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.

SPECIAL MESSAGE

Father Tom Iwanowski, the writer of Looking to Sunday, has co-authored a book of Lenten Reflections for the coming season of Lent. The book, entitled, OPEN OUR HEARTS, is published by Ave Marie Press.

It is available directly from Ave Marie Press (avemariapress.com) and also online from Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

DRAWING A CROWD

The Super Bowl.

A Bruce Springsteen concert.

The newest digital device from Apple.

The announcement of a cure for cancer.

Those four things have something in common. They all would attract widespread attention and draw crowds of people. That would be the case because the Super Bowl and a Bruce Springsteen concert would add joy and excitement to life, while the newest digital device and a cure for cancer would make life better. One would make us more efficient and informed and the other would allow us to live longer and healthier lives.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Mark 1:29-39), Jesus attracts attention and draws crowds of people. We read that "the whole town was gathered at the door" of Simon and Andrew's house because Jesus was there. The following day Jesus' private prayer is interrupted by his disciples who tell him "everyone is looking for you."

Those crowds of people were attracted to Jesus for the same reasons that people would be attracted by a Super Bowl game, a rock concert, a new digital device or a cancer cure. People came to Jesus because his message and his ministry brought joy to people and made life better.

Jesus proclaimed the good news of God's mercy and of God's specific, personal love for every person. The poor, the ignored, the powerless, the sinner, as well as the saint, were so precious that God even kept count of the number of hairs on their head.

In his ministry, Jesus brought healing to the sick, light to those in the darkness of despair and sorrow, and freedom to those possessed by evil and sin. Those he touched found a new, fuller life in him, one with meaning and purpose, and one that made them part of something wonderful and greater than themselves.

Today, the Church, the living Body of Christ, charged with the responsibility of proclaiming his message and continuing his ministry, is not drawing crowds to its doors. In fact, the opposite is true. People are walking away from our doors. Only about 30% of Catholics now regularly

attend Sunday Mass, and some 1/3 of those born Catholic have left the Church. Clearly everyone is NOT looking for us!

There are a variety of possible explanations, but perhaps one is simply this – many people no longer see the Church's message and ministry as enriching their life. That may be the case because we may not be exhibiting the joy that comes with our Catholic Faith nor witnessing to the fuller, more abundant life we have found in Christ. If people are going to be drawn to Christ and His Church, each of us needs to be a source of attraction.

© 2012 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski