

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, May 26, 2013

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.

LITTLE IDEA

Most of us have had the experience of listening to someone speak and the more we listened the more we began to think the person had little idea of what he or she was talking about.

That can happen when we ask a salesperson about a particular product and we soon realize we know more about the item than the person trying to make the sale.

It can happen in a course where the more classes we attend the more we begin to sense that the teacher is just a few pages ahead of us in the textbook.

Such a thing can also happen this Sunday as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity.

The homilist can begin talking about the Trinity in terms of a shamrock with three leaves. Three leaves, one shamrock. Or the homilist can point to water, one substance, that can take on three forms, a solid, a liquid, and a gas. So three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but one God.

Or the homilist can point to the Father as the Creator, the Son as God's enfleshed presence on earth, and the Holy Spirit as the way God's power continues to work in our world. Yet that image can lead us to think of a disjointed Trinity with the Father sending his Son, the Son returning after his work on earth, and the Holy Spirit taking over the task of trying to move people in the right direction.

Or the homilist can use heavy theological words like consubstantial, procession, substance, essence, nature, and hypostatic to explain this central Christian doctrine and we can be more confused than enlightened.

Such homilies might lead us to believe that the speaker really has little idea of what he is talking about. It would be safe to say that after this Sunday's sermon, the Holy Trinity will remain a mystery.

But if we think about it, that is exactly what should happen. The God we worship is holy, all holy. One way to think of holy is as something set apart, something not related to the ordinary. The church for example is a holy place, a place set apart from the other, ordinary places. The scriptures are holy, set apart from other books and writings.

We might say that God is both holy and wholly, "wholly other," "wholly set apart," beyond anything we can imagine or conceive. Our words that describe God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit only give us a tiny insight into who God is. And those words hide as much as they reveal. If we think we can explain the mystery that is God we are mistaken. As Saint Augustine wrote, "If you have understood, then what you have understood is not God."

God is utterly beyond us. We cannot define God. We cannot control God. We cannot manipulate God. We cannot make God serve our purposes. All we can do is love God and try to serve God as best we can. That is the truth to which the Spirit of God wishes to lead us. As we read in this Sunday's Gospel, "When he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth." (John 16:12-15)

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