

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, June 12, 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.

MISSION POSSIBLE

Some years ago there was a television series called *Mission Impossible*. It centered on an ultra secret government operations unit that was charged with carrying out missions that were seemingly impossible. These operations involved toppling hostile foreign leaders, rescuing hostages, stopping acts of terrorism, putting crime bosses out of business, bringing former Nazis to justice, recovering priceless art treasures and historical artifacts, etc.

These impossible missions were successfully carried out in every case using ingenuity, disguise, daring, stealth, high tech equipment, and agents selected for their special skills.

It may seem strange to be writing about *Mission Impossible* in relationship to the Gospel (John 20:19-23) for this coming Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, the final day of this Easter Season. Yet that Gospel centers on the Risen Lord giving his disciples a mission. Jesus tells them "'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.'"

Those words of Jesus may sound familiar, and they should. We heard that same Gospel reading, with some additional verses, on the Second Sunday of Easter, May 1, 2011.

Twice during the Sundays of the Easter Season, the Risen Lord gives his Church, a special mission. He commissions his disciples to continue his work of overcoming sin and evil and of bringing people into peace and harmony with God and with one another. A seemingly impossible mission in this world of distrust, hatred and suspicion, where ethnic, racial, religious, and political differences pull people apart and lead them to view "the other" as "the enemy."

We even see this distrust and polarization in our Church. Catholics label one another as liberal, progressive, moderate, conservative, or reactionary. There are social justice Catholics and pro-life Catholics, John Paul II Catholics and Vatican II Catholics, those who see Church law and doctrine as unchanging and others who view them as an expression of the truth conditioned by time and place. Each group sees itself as truly Roman Catholic and judges the others as something less than faithful to Christ.

The Risen Lord sends us out with a seemingly impossible task of overcoming those divisions. But at the same time he gives us the means to accomplish that task. He gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit to be our source of strength, power and inspiration.

The breath of God that gave life to the first man and woman, the Spirit that came down upon Jesus at the Jordan and inspired him to announce the Kingdom of God was at hand, the Holy Spirit that drove the Apostles out into the streets of Jerusalem that first Pentecost to proclaim the Resurrection, that same Spirit has been given to us.

As disciples sent into this hostile, broken world to continue the work of Jesus, we have a seemingly impossible mission. However, if we open ourselves to the power and strength of the Holy Spirit, that "mission impossible" can become "mission possible!"

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