

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 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.

FRESH VISION

Every July 4th, we celebrate our nation's independence and the freedoms we enjoy as citizens of the United States. But among those who observe the Fourth of July there are certain persons who celebrate that holiday more reverently, joyfully, and gratefully than most other Americans. They are the men and women who came to this land from places where freedom is only a hope and not a reality.

Such people truly appreciate what many native born citizens simply see as an accepted part of life. Such people look with awe and wonder at elections that actually make a difference; at comedians who can satirize government officials without fear of arrest; at churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques inviting people to openly proclaim faith in God; at the variety of public, private, and religious schools competing for students; and at a social media that freely allows every person to express his or her thoughts.

Such individuals are able to see what we, who have lived in "the land of the free and the home of the brave" all our life, may no longer see or truly appreciate.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Mark 6:1-6), Jesus returns to "his native place." There in Nazareth he enters the synagogue and begins to teach. The people are initially astonished at his words but soon that astonishment turns to puzzlement and then to rejection. They cannot see the person now standing before them. They simply see him as they have always seen him. He is just the son of Mary and of Joseph, the carpenter. He is just a maker of furniture. He is just like his relatives in town, just another hometown boy. He is no better than anyone else. Who is he to be speaking to them about anything. "And they took offense at him."

Jesus, in last Sunday's Gospel, left people "utterly astounded" when he raised the dead daughter of Jairus and healed the woman with a hemorrhage. In this Sunday's Gospel, which immediately follows, Jesus is met with such rejection by his neighbors that he is "amazed at their lack of faith."

We, who have always been Catholics, can be like the people of Nazareth. We can think we know all there is to know about Jesus Christ. There is nothing new he has to say to us. His message is just the same old one we have heard before. We know who he is. We can repeat the titles he has been given – Savior, Lord, Redeemer, and Son of God. Yet if anyone asked us to explain what those titles mean we would probably stumble over our words.

We think we know Jesus because we have known him all our life. That might explain why it is often said, "Converts make the best Catholics." Converts see with new eyes, fresh eyes. Their vision is not clouded by time and familiarity. They remember what it was like to have their sins forgiven and forgotten. They recall how it felt to be embraced by the Lord who accepted them

without condition and called them his brother, his sister. They still appreciate the meaning and purpose of life they found in the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus.

July 4th is best celebrated by those who truly see the freedoms we enjoy as Americans. Jesus is best known, appreciated, worshipped and loved by those whose vision remains fresh, whose vision has not been clouded over time.

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