

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, August 12, 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.

A SPEAKER KNOWS

A good speaker knows how to read an audience. A good speaker knows when the members of an audience are paying attention, when they are drifting, when they approve of what is being said, and when they do not appreciate the ideas being proposed.

When an audience disagrees with a speaker, people suddenly start coughing, a murmur begins to fill the room, heads begin to nod from side to side, and sometimes even booing and catcalls begin to be heard. Listeners are not passive; they are either with or against a speaker. If an audience is completely passive it indicates that those present do not even care enough about the topic to approve or disapprove of the speaker's words.

This Sunday's Gospel (John 6:41-51) relates what took place the day after Jesus fed the crowd of thousands with the five loaves and two fish. Jesus is speaking to the Jews gathered in the synagogue in Capernaum. There he tells the audience, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

The Jews murmur when he made, what they considered, an outrageous statement. How could he possibly be from heaven? They know his father and mother. But rather than backing down in the face of their disbelief, Jesus goes on to say, "Stop murmuring among yourselves....I am the bread of life." He reiterates the statement that caused the negative reaction. Then he says for a third time, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven."

No matter the negative reaction, Jesus continues to proclaim his identity before his hearers. He is more than he seems. He is the one who has come down from heaven. He is the one who reveals God the Father. He is the one who brings heavenly bread that satisfies our hunger for meaning and purpose in life. This bread, which is the Gospel of Jesus, is greater than anything that has come before. As Jesus said, "Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die."

Jesus then goes on to say something even more remarkable. He not only brings the bread that is God's truth, he is the "living bread." God's truth, God's very presence, is made flesh in him.

The synagogue in Capernaum was filled with murmuring when Jesus revealed his identity, proclaimed the truth, and announced he was the "living bread" that would give life to the world. Today, as the Church proclaims the truth of Jesus Christ, much of society still murmurs, still nods its head in disapproval, still dismisses the message. But like its Lord, the Church must continue to speak the truth!