

LOOKING TO SUNDAY™

Sunday, November 14, 2010

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.

PREDICTIONS PAST

- The Temple will be destroyed.
- False prophets will arrive on the scene.
- Nation will rise against nation.
- There will be earthquakes, famines and plagues.
- Christians will be persecuted and some put to death because of their faith.

When we read those statements made by Jesus in this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 21:5-19), we can think of them as predictions telling us what will happen in the distant future just before Jesus returns in glory.

Yet when the Gospel of Luke was written sometime between 60 to 90 AD those predictions were already in the process of taking place. The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by Roman troops in 70 AD. False prophets and self-proclaimed messiahs continued to appear on the scene. Wars and violence came with living in the Middle East. Natural disasters, famine and disease kept on claiming human life especially among the poor. Christians were being persecuted by Jews, who saw them as traitors to their ancestral faith, and by Romans, who demanded worship of the divine emperor.

In spite of those evils, Jesus tells his disciples "by your perseverance you will secure your lives." And that happened. The Church of Christ persevered. The message of the Gospel was not silenced. We might even say that in a sense the followers of Christ witnessed his return in glory, as Jesus rose from the darkness of the tomb, appeared in glory, and was proclaimed "Lord and God." Faithful Christians shared in that victory over sin and death. By their perseverance they secured their lives.

Today's world is just as troubled as the one to which Luke addressed his Gospel. There are wars and acts of terrorism. The Middle East remains volatile and violent. There are false prophets proclaiming messages contrary to the Gospel's message of reconciliation and peace. There are earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and ecological disasters. Christians in many nations face discrimination, economic penalties, persecution, and even death because of their faith.

The predictions of Jesus about coming evils continue to be fulfilled in our day but so does the message of hope that brings Sunday's Gospel to a close. "By your perseverance you will secure your lives."