

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, January 4, 2015

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.

SEEKING DIRECTION

We know very little about the magi mentioned in this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 2:1-12). They appear only in Matthew's Gospel, and only in the verses chosen for Sunday's reading.

The Gospel does tell us these magi, these non-Jews, were "from the east." But it does not tell us where in the east nor does it reveal how many magi there were. Traditionally we surmise that there must have been three since they presented three gifts to the newborn king, namely, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

We also assume that the magi were men. The proof of that assumption may be found in the fact we sometimes refer to them as the "three wise men" or the "three kings." Yet as some people have humorously observed, all the magi could not have been men since they did a very unmanly thing. They stopped to ask for directions. As we read in the Gospel, when they came to Jerusalem they asked, "Where is the newborn King of the Jews?"

Following the star had gotten them to Jerusalem in their quest to find the newborn king, but in the end they needed to stop and ask others for directions. Those directions came from the chief priests and scribes, who at the order of King Herod had consulted the writings of the prophets. They reported that those writings predicted, "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel."

Led by those directions and by the light of the star, the magi found the child they were seeking in Bethlehem. "They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

Besides showing that this newborn king was revealed not only to Jews but also to Gentiles, represented by the magi, Sunday's reading also teaches us the importance of seeking direction in our spiritual life.

The fact that we know Jesus as our Savior and Lord is due to the direction we have received. We have been shown the way to Jesus by our parents and other family members, by catechists and religion teachers, by priests and religious, by Church members who have publicly witnessed to their faith by their way of life, and by the divinely inspired words recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and other scriptural writers.

If we are to grow closer to the Lord we need to continue to seek direction. In fact, the Church advises those who are serious about growing in relationship with God to seek the guidance of a spiritual director to guide them on their faith journey.

Such direction also comes to us each Sunday as we gather for Mass. We are given direction as the scriptures are proclaimed, the homily is preached, and the liturgy of the Church is

celebrated. It is interesting to consider that there may be more women than men in many of our churches because women have the sense to seek direction.

As the magi would tell us, none of us, man or woman, finds Jesus on our own. We all need direction!

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Best Wishes for a New Year filled with God's Presence and Peace!