

## **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, January 13, 2019**

***The Baptism of the Lord***

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings 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.

### **LOOKING FOR "LIKES"**

Imagine having a Facebook page without any likes.

Imagine having a Twitter account without any followers.

Imagine posting photos on Instagram that are never viewed.

Imagine having a YouTube Channel that no one watches.

Imagine only receiving emails and text messages from companies trying to sell you something.

Anyone in that situation would certainly feel out of place in our day where being noticed, being seen, being recognized, seems to validate a person's existence. Even being noticed for the wrong reasons, is better than not being noticed at all!

In this Sunday's Gospel for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (Luke 3:15-16, 21-22) we meet two people who did not seem to care about being noticed.

By his preaching, John the Baptist certainly attracted the attention of the crowds. We are told "at that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River." (Matthew 3:5-6).

But rather than rejoicing in that attention, John did all he could to deflect interest away from himself.

As John told the people, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals."

John the Baptist was not interested in gaining "followers" and "likes." Instead he was interested in alerting people to the one whose coming they were awaiting, the coming of the Christ, the coming of the Messiah.

When that Messiah came, he did not come in a dramatic way that caught the attention of the world. While this Christmas season, which ends this Sunday, has focused our attention on singing angels, awe-struck shepherds, a shining star in the heavens, and searching magi, we need to realize most people took no notice of the Messiah born in Bethlehem. He hardly made a showing on the "social media" of his day.

While we might imagine that changed on the day of his baptism, that was not the case.

Luke tells us that Jesus simply was baptized along with other people who came to John at the Jordan River. There was no dramatic spectacle.

In Luke's account the coming of the Spirit and the words of the Father come when Jesus is at prayer. "After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was

praying ... the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven.”

While the Gospel of John indicates that John the Baptist saw the dove, Matthew says these events were seen only by Jesus. Certainly, if these events were witnessed by all present, there would have been a dramatic reaction.

As Jesus begins his public ministry, he does so in a humble, unassuming, prayerful way. And that is how Jesus acts throughout the Gospels. He is not an attention seeker looking for praise and adulation. He is not concerned with impressing the public with miracles. He is not interested in media attention and increasing the number of his admirers.

No, like John the Baptist, Jesus was dedicated only to doing the will of his Father. We might say Jesus was only interested in getting his Father’s “thumbs up.”

As baptized members of God’s Church, that also is the “like” we need to seek. We need to be Christians who hear the Father say, "You are my beloved ... with you I am well pleased."

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