

## **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, February 14, 2016**

### ***The First Sunday of Lent***

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.

### **THE DEVIL & VALENTINE'S DAY**

This Sunday, February 14, is Valentine's Day. A day associated with love and romance, hearts and flowers, Hallmark cards with sentimental verses, candy and jewelry, proposals of marriage and wedding ceremonies, and of course restaurants crowded with loving couples.

It is a day when church congregations might expect to hear scripture readings about love and marriage. We would not be surprised to hear a reading from the book of Genesis about God creating woman since God saw it was not good for man to be alone. Or to hear Saint Paul's famous passage from First Corinthians where he writes that love is patient, kind, not jealous, able to bear all things, and hope all things. Those passages might lead to the Gospel reading where Jesus says that what God has joined no one must divide, or perhaps we might hear Jesus' great command to "love one another as I love you."

However, such readings will not be heard in any Catholic Church this Sunday. For while the civil calendar labels this Sunday as Valentine's Day, the Church's calendar identifies it as the First Sunday of Lent. So instead of a Gospel reading dealing with love, the Gospel assigned for this day is about Jesus being tempted by the devil. (Luke 4:1-13). Non-Catholics would certainly find that an odd reading for February 14.

Yet if we look at the responses that Jesus gives to each of the devil's temptations, those responses do relate to love, they do relate to Valentine's Day. For in resisting the temptations of the devil Jesus remains true to his loving relationship with his Father. Jesus remains true to the one who has first place in his heart.

The devil first tempts Jesus to prove himself by performing a miracle to satisfy his own needs. In response Jesus, says that "It is written: *One does not live on bread alone.*" Jesus teaches us that the gnawing hunger within us cannot be satisfied by any physical thing. We have a deeper hunger within us that yearns for a loving relationship with God, with the God who created us for himself.

In the second temptation, the devil tempts Jesus by promising him worldly power and glory if only Jesus would put the devil before his relationship with God. In response Jesus says "It is written: *You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.*" Jesus proclaims that a relationship with God is of greater value than all the power and glory this passing world can offer. Having a place in God's heart outweighs any position or status in society.

Finally in the third temptation, the devil challenges Jesus to demonstrate his special relationship as the Son of God by hurling himself down from the wall of the Temple. Jesus answers the devil by replying that scripture says, "*You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the*

*test.*” Jesus shows us that we are to live with trust in God’s loving care. Such trust does not demand that God pass any tests that we creatures might require before we love him in return.

The fact that the First Sunday of Lent and Valentine’s Day both fall on the same day may be a happy coincidence. For this Sunday is not only a day to show our love for special people in our lives, it is also a day to consider those temptations that may be lessening our love for God.

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