

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

## **First Sunday of Lent, February 22, 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.

### **WHAT DID HE DO?**

If we heard about someone spending 40 days and nights alone in an empty house with a minimum of food but without any human company, without a cell phone, radio, computer or any other means of communication or entertainment, the logical question would be, "What did that person do during all that time?"

In this Sunday's Gospel (Mark 1:12-15), we learn what happens after Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan River. We are told that the Spirit of God drives Jesus into the desert. There he stays for 40 days.

So what did Jesus do during his almost six weeks in the wasteland?

Mark only tells us that Jesus was "tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him." Matthew and Luke add that Jesus fasted. But fasting is a passive activity. It will not fill the hours of the day, except for drawing our attention to our growling stomachs.

So what did Jesus do? The fact that we are told Jesus was tempted, gives us an indication of what occupied Jesus during those 40 days. Guided by the Spirit, Jesus spent time thinking and praying about his mission. He considered what the Father was asking of him and how he could faithfully accomplish the Father's will.

The temptations that Mark reports, and that Matthew and Luke describe in more vivid terms as actual conversations with Satan, could be understood as thoughts that came to Jesus during his time of reflection. Thoughts that whispered there was an easier way, other than God's way, to be the messiah. Be a messiah of power and display, a messiah willing to compromise with the world.

Yet Jesus rejected those temptations and left the desert knowing what he had to do. He was to proclaim, "The kingdom of God is at hand." And he was to make that kingdom visible by his way of life and by overcoming the forces of darkness and sin.

Those days in the desert gave Jesus the opportunity to think, to pray, and to reflect on what God wanted of him. It also allowed Jesus to reject in advance those things that would compromise his mission and his relationship with God.

This Season of Lent might be seen as the time when the Spirit of God moves us into the "desert." It is a time of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, sacrifice, and penance. But perhaps the best thing we might do this Lent is to do what Jesus did. To think, to reflect, and to ask ourselves, "What is it that God wants me to be doing at this point in my life?" "What things, what temptations, are holding me back from what God is asking of me?"

Of course, stopping and taking quiet time for such reflection is not easy in our very "un-desert-like" world. But perhaps we can begin by taking just one minute to do that today. Take just one

minute to stop and reflect. Then add another minute tomorrow. Reflect for two minutes. Then keep adding an additional minute each day of Lent.

By the end of the Lent we will be reflecting some 40 minutes a day. That “desert time” will help us to see what is happening in our life, what God is asking of us, and what temptations and behaviors are holding us back from doing what God wishes.

What did Jesus do for 40 days? He reflected. He thought about his life and mission. May his example inspire us during this season of Lent to take some minutes to do the same!

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