

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, March 1, 2020

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.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than eleven years.

ENTICING

Those in the business of selling things to the public know the importance of showing their products in attractive and enticing ways. They do their best to make sure their displays of merchandise and their advertising catch the attention of potential customers.

We certainly see that as soon as we enter a department store like Macy's or Nordstrom. From the moment we walk through their doors everything is geared to capture our attention and to make us believe that the items we see are things we need and should buy.

The first "seller" to know the importance of enticing people with his products appears in this Sunday's First Reading and Gospel. There we see the devil working at persuading people to buy what he was selling.

In the First Reading (Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7), the serpent, the devil, entices the woman to consider the beauty of the tree that she and her husband were forbidden to touch. After the devil's sly words, the woman concludes "that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom." So, she eats of the tree and shares the fruit with her husband. They find the devil's enticement irresistible.

In the Gospel reading (Matthew 4:1-11), the devil does the same thing. That is especially evident in the third and final temptation. The devil takes Jesus up a high mountain and shows him "all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence." He promises all this power and glory can be his, if Jesus just prostrates himself and worships him. Jesus, however, rejects the devil's enticement. He says, "Get away, Satan! It is written: *The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.*"

The devil who successfully tempted the man and woman in the garden but failed with Jesus, continues to try and seduce humanity today.

He entices us with attention-grabbing things that can pull us away from God, from the Church, and from our relationships with other members of the human family.

The devil can entice us with our smartphones. He can lead us to believe that constantly looking at our phone is more important than paying attention to the people God has placed in our lives, even more important than spending time with the Lord. Rather than looking up in prayer to God, we end up looking down at the flickering screen in our hand.

The devil can enthrall us with the cult of celebrity. He can make us want to be seen as an influencer in the world of social media. He can make us think that we find meaning in life not by following the Gospel but in collecting digital followers.

The devil can beguile us with non-stop entertainment available through television, radio, podcasts, video games, the internet, cable and streaming services – diversions that are as close as our smartphone or tablet. That never-ending entertainment overcomes the silence we need to hear the gentle voice of God.

The devil can trick us into thinking that drugs, alcohol, gambling, casual sex, power, and fulfilling our every desire is the way to happiness rather than living the way revealed by Jesus.

The devil, the clever salesman, is always tempting us to buy what he is selling, for he knows if we do, we will end up just where he wants us, outside the garden with Adam and Eve.

This Lent is the time for us to become more aware of the devil's enticements so that like Jesus we too can say, "Get away, Satan!"

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