

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, March 5, 2017

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.

WHO REPORTED?

The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, CNN, FOX News, the NBC Nightly News, and all other sources of news get their information from journalists, reporters, government agencies, and from people on the scene who can describe what took place. Someone needs to provide information to those news services.

The same was true for the Gospel writers. They had to have witnessed or been told about the events they described in their writings. Inspired by the Holy Spirit they took the information they had and produced the Gospels that have nourished the faith of Christians for almost 2,000 years.

This Sunday, we hear a story that appears each year on the First Sunday of Lent, namely, the temptations of Jesus. This year we read Matthew's account describing that event (Matthew 4:1-11). He tells us that after Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River, "Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil." There Jesus faced three separate temptations that he successfully resisted. "Then the devil left him."

However, a person reading that report in Sunday's Gospel might ask an obvious question, namely, how did Matthew know what happened? How did he know what Jesus and the devil said to one another? Matthew was not there.

Someone might say that the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew and told him what to write. However, there may be another explanation, one that even a person without faith might accept. Jesus revealed what happened.

Jesus told Matthew about being tempted to use his power for his own benefit, to impress people with miraculous deeds, and to acquire earthly fame and glory.

While Matthew described Jesus as hearing those temptations directly from the mouth of the devil, perhaps they came another way. They may have come in the form of thoughts, ideas, and suggestions that the devil placed in the mind of Jesus as he reflected on the mission before him.

After all, that is how most temptations come. They come in the form of selfish and sinful thoughts, ideas, cravings, and desires that float through our minds. If not recognized, confronted and examined, those thoughts become sinful actions.

We certainly see that in today's First Reading from the Book of Genesis. It was a thought that the serpent insinuated into the minds of the first humans that led them to disobey their Creator and resulted in their expulsion from the garden.

Of all the things we can do this Lent, perhaps one of the most important is to take time to reflect and examine what kind of thoughts and ideas are circulating in our minds.

Jesus revealed what happened in the desert so that like him we might resist those thoughts, those temptations, that can lead us away from God. Otherwise, as happened with Adam and Eve, those thoughts will develop into sin and disobedience and separate us from God.

Sunday's Gospel and this season of Lent challenge each of us to ask, "What is in my mind?"

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