

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, March 9, 2014

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.

THE ANTAGONIST

Every literary work contains an element of conflict as the protagonist struggles with the antagonist. To put it another way, engaging stories have heroes and villains struggling for victory. They have "good guys" and "bad guys" in conflict. They have positive and negative forces arrayed in opposition.

The struggle found in works of literature mirrors the struggle found in the story of salvation. That struggle begins in the first pages of the Book of Genesis as Adam and Eve confront the temptation voiced by the serpent. As we know, that struggle ends with evil overcoming the first generation of humanity. Evil wins and Adam and Eve are removed from the Garden.

This Sunday, the season of Lent begins with another famous story of conflict (Matthew 4:1-11) as Jesus confronts the same antagonist who appeared in Genesis. After his baptism by John in the Jordan River, Jesus goes into the desert for a time of reflection, fasting, and prayer. There he is confronted by the devil.

Three times, the tempter approaches Jesus urging him to act in ways contrary to his identity and to his mission as God's beloved Son.

The devil tempts Jesus to put his physical needs before all else, to prove his identity with a public display of power, and finally to embrace worldly prestige and glory.

Jesus resists those temptations, proclaiming, "Get away, Satan! It is written: The Lord, your God, shall you worship, and him alone shall you serve."

As we begin the Season of Lent this story of confrontation between Jesus and Satan, between good and evil, reminds us of the confrontation that is a continuing part of our lives as Christians.

At our baptism we promised to renounce Satan, all his works, all his empty promises – all his temptations. Those temptations continually come at us through the media that ridicules the things of God, through advertising that proclaims that material possessions guarantee happiness, through a society that makes satisfying physical urges the prime good, and through the example of the rich and the famous whose narcissistic way of living is extolled.

Lent is a time for us to recognize that the devil who appeared in the Garden, who met Jesus in the desert, is still confronting all those who strive to live as God's beloved sons and daughters. The struggle continues since our antagonist has not given up!

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