

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, March 16, 2025

The Second 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 sixteen years.

AWESOME, WONDROUS, AMAZING

Amazing, incredible, astounding, awesome, miraculous, wondrous, unbelievable! These might be some of the words that Abram, Peter, James, and John would use to describe their experience with the Divine.

In Sunday's First Reading (Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18), we learn of Abram's encounter with the Divine. God appears to Abram and promises that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars of heaven and would possess a land of their own. To confirm these promises, God makes a covenant with Abram during which he experiences a deep, terrifying darkness and witnesses God's presence in "a smoking fire pot and flaming torch" that move between the animals he has sacrificed.

In our Gospel (Luke 9:28b-36), Peter, James, and John have their own wondrous encounter with the Divine. Jesus takes the three up a mountain where he then prays, but they fall asleep. When they awake, they see Jesus bathed in divine glory and conversing with Moses and Elijah.

The awestruck disciples then hear the voice of God proclaim, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." Moses and Elijah are seen no longer, for they have been surpassed by Jesus.

Peter, James, and John are left speechless and unable to put into words what they experienced on the mountain. As Luke tells us, "They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen."

Their encounters with the Divine certainly deepened the faith of Abram, Peter, James, and John and redirected their lives. It led Abram to do what God asked of him. It led Peter, James, and John to see Jesus as more than their master: he was the fulfillment of the law and prophets, and he was the Messiah and the Son of God.

An experience of the Divine is not limited to those mentioned in the Scriptures or to the saints. We all can experience an encounter with the Divine. Such an encounter happens each time we come to Mass. When we gather with our fellow Christians, Jesus, the Son of God, is present. As he assured us, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

During Mass, we hear God's voice from the heavens as the inspired Word of God is proclaimed in the readings. In fact, after the Gospel is read, we profess that Jesus himself has spoken to us as we acclaim, "Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ."

During the Eucharistic Prayer, God renews his covenant with us. Not the one made with Abram and Moses, but the new covenant: our new relationship with God through Jesus Christ. As the

priest prays during the consecration, "Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant."

In our receiving Holy Communion, we have an encounter with God even more amazing than that experienced by Peter, James, and John during the Transfiguration of Jesus. Jesus does more than shine with glory: he places himself into our hands so that we might receive him and become one with him. In this way, Divinity enters our humanity.

But since Mass is so readily available, we can take it for granted and fail to fully grasp what is happening before our eyes. If we truly appreciate what happens at Mass, we might describe it as Abram, Peter, James, and John may have described their encounter with the Divine. What happens at Mass is amazing, incredible, astounding, awesome, miraculous, wondrous, unbelievable!

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