

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, March 17, 2019

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 ten years.

WHAT DID HE PRAY FOR?

Who was your best friend in high school?

What is your favorite movie?

What place do you most enjoy visiting?

Those are easy questions to answer. But some questions are far harder, more personal, and more revealing. One such question, and one we may never have been asked is this: "In your personal, private prayerful conversations with God, what do you ask of God? What do you pray for?"

Our response to such a question reveals a great deal about ourselves. It reveals our worries, concerns, hopes and dreams. It reveals what we consider important and which people have a special place in our lives.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 9:28-36), we hear Luke's account of the Transfiguration of Jesus. It begins with the words, "Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray." We might ask, in that time of personal prayer, what was Jesus saying to God, what was Jesus praying for?

Was he praying for guidance, as he did before he chose his 12 apostles? "Jesus departed to the mountain to pray...when day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve." (Luke 6:12-13)

Was he praying for the wellbeing of his disciples, as he did at the Last Supper? "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me." (John 17:9).

Was he praying for the strength to faithfully follow God's will, as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane? "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39)

What was Jesus asking of God as he prayed in this Sunday's Gospel? We might conclude that Jesus was praying that his disciples might grow in their relationship with him, that they might come to know him better.

That seems to be the prayer that was answered. "While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white." In that blaze of glory, Peter, James, and John came to know Jesus as far more than just a man or a charismatic rabbi.

In that moment, they also came to know Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets represented by Moses and Elijah who appeared beside him.

Then from the cloud, the sign of the Divine Presence, came the solemn proclamation, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him."

Certainly Peter, James, and John knew Jesus more fully and completely after their experience on the mountain. Jesus wanted that to happen, otherwise he would not have taken them with him. He would not have prayed in their presence.

In this season of Lent, we are called to pray more. But perhaps this Lent, we might think of Jesus as praying for us. As Paul tells us, "It is Christ who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us." (Romans 8:34)

Jesus prays that like Peter, James, and John we might come to know him better. He prays that we might grow in our relationship with him. He prays that we might truly recognize him as the only one we are to obey and follow, for as God said of him, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him."

This Lent, as we devote ourselves to prayer, we need to realize that Jesus is also praying – praying that we might grow in our relationship with him!

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