

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, March 26, 2017**

## ***The Fourth 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.

### **GRADUAL LIGHT, GRADUAL INSIGHT**

When we are about to enter a dark room, we put out our hand and search for a light switch. When we find it, we flip the switch and in an instant the room is filled with light. The darkness is gone and we immediately see what is in the room.

However, when it comes to the sun, the world's source of light, that is not how things work. The sun gradually rises and its light slowly dispels the darkness. The darkness of midnight is not overcome by the light of noonday in a second. The same gradual process occurs at the end of the day. The sun slowly sets and as it does the light fades and is replaced by darkness.

In this Sunday's Gospel (John 9:1-41) for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, one type of light comes in a flash and another type of light appears far more slowly.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus and his disciples encounter "a man blind from birth." Jesus, who describes himself as "the light of the world," powerfully demonstrates the truth of that claim by giving sight to the blind man. Jesus smears clay on the eyes of the man and tells him to wash in the nearby Pool of Siloam. As the clay washes away, his eyes are opened. He is able to see for the first time in his existence. In a moment, darkness is overcome by light.

While the blind man is given physical sight in an instant, the Gospel describes another enlightening process, one that takes place not in a moment but gradually.

When the blind man first encounters Jesus, he only knows him as a man. But as the reading continues his understanding of Jesus gradually grows. The man's spiritual vision increases. He goes from seeing Jesus as a man to seeing him as a prophet. Later the man recognizes Jesus as someone sent from God and finally as being the Son of Man whom he worships and calls "Lord."

As that man is becoming more enlightened about the identity of Jesus, the Pharisees are becoming more lost in the darkness of disbelief. They refuse to accept the fact of the man's cure and they assume the one who gave him sight must obviously not be from God since "he does not keep the Sabbath." As their spiritual darkness increases, the Pharisees conclude "that this man (Jesus) is a sinner."

The blind man who was given sight in a moment is gradually enlightened as to the identity of Jesus, while the Pharisees gradually become spiritually blind.

Sunday's Gospel teaches us that a relationship with Jesus is not something that happens in an instant. It happens over a period of time as we gradually grow in our understanding of Jesus as spiritual teacher, religious leader, Son of Man, Savior, Lord, and God. It grows as we spend time with the one who is the light of the world, and the light of our lives.

The opposite is equally true. The less time we spend with Jesus, the more the darkness overtakes our faith and our relationship with Jesus gradually fades from view.

A relationship with Jesus is not something that suddenly switches on and off. It gradually develops, but without care and attention, it can also slowly disappear.

*© 2017 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski*