

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, March 27, 2016

Easter Sunday

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.

EYE WITNESSES

“Did anyone see what happened?”

That question is one of the first asked by police officers when they are called to the scene of a crime.

It is also one of the first questions asked by reporters when they arrive to cover a breaking story.

That question also comes to our lips when we hear about some surprising event.

When something unexpected and extraordinary occurs, people want to hear from eyewitnesses who saw what happened.

This Sunday, Easter Sunday, we hear about the most important event in human history, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The obvious question that comes to mind, and surely was asked that first Easter Sunday by the Pharisees and the scribes, by Pilate and Herod, and by the people of Jerusalem and especially by the disciples of Jesus was, “Did anyone see what happened? “

The Gospels report there were eyewitnesses to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem; eyewitnesses to his feeding a crowd of thousands with a few loaves and fish; eyewitnesses to his making the crippled walk, the deaf hear and the blind see; eyewitnesses to his restoring Lazarus to life; eyewitnesses to his being transfigured in glory and appearing with Moses and Elijah; and eyewitnesses to his death and burial.

But when it comes to the Resurrection, there are no eyewitness accounts in the Gospels reporting what happened at the tomb that first Easter Sunday. No one saw what occurred except for God and his angels.

However, this Sunday's Gospel (John 20:1-9) does provide us with evidence found at the scene. We read that the stone that was sealing the tomb was removed, an indication that something happened. Then, besides reporting the tomb was empty, the Gospel makes a point of speaking about the burial cloths used to cover the body of Jesus. It says the disciples who went into the tomb saw the burial cloths and the cloth used to cover the head of Jesus “not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.”

If the body of Jesus had been secretly removed or stolen, those taking the body would not have removed the cloth wrappings and they would not have carefully folded up the head covering and put it in another place. Those taking the body would have acted as quickly as possible since there were guards near the tomb.

While there were no eyewitnesses to the actual event of the Resurrection, there were and continue to be eyewitnesses who can testify that Jesus Christ is risen and alive. The disciples, as we will hear in the Gospel accounts read during this Easter Season, saw the Risen Lord. They spoke with him. They touched him. They ate with him.

Furthermore, we also encounter the Risen Lord as the scriptures are proclaimed, as we celebrate the liturgy, as we share his Body and Blood in Holy Communion, and as we gather together as Church – the living Body of Christ.

We, in a sense, are eyewitnesses. We have seen the Risen Lord, not coming out of the tomb, but coming into our lives!

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Happy Easter!

May the Risen Lord bless you with his presence and peace.