

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015

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.

WHEN SEEING BECOMES BELIEVING

It's said that seeing is believing, yet seeing the same thing does not necessarily mean believing the same thing.

For example, people can look at climate data and end up believing different things. One group of people can see the data and believe that the climate is changing due to an increase in carbon dioxide caused by industrial production, the use of coal for electrical generation, and other human activity. Another group can see the same data and believe that climate change is happening due to solar activity and naturally occurring variations in weather patterns.

Residents of a city can see plans that call for the construction of luxury towers with hundreds of new apartments and believe it to be a positive development that will bring new jobs and prosperity. Other citizens can see the same plans and believe the construction will displace lower and middle class residents and increase economic disparity.

Seeing the same thing does not mean believing the same thing. We certainly see that borne out in the Gospel reading for this Easter Sunday (John 20:1-9). Three people saw something that first Easter Sunday morning yet all three did not end up believing the same thing.

Mary of Magdala comes to the tomb in the darkness before the dawn and sees the stone removed from the entrance. She sees and believes that the body of Jesus has been removed from its resting place. Mary draws a logical conclusion. Thieves entered the tomb and took away the body of her Lord. "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him."

At the report of Mary, Peter and another disciple run to the tomb. Peter goes in and sees "the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place." Peter sees but does not come to the same conclusion as Mary. Peter is confused – uncertain what to believe about the absence of the body of Jesus.

The other disciple, described as the one "whom Jesus loved," then goes into the tomb. This beloved disciple sees what Peter sees but this disciple believes that Jesus has risen from the dead. As the Gospel relates, "the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed."

Perhaps this disciple believed because the arrangement of the burial cloths led him to conclude that the body of Jesus was not stolen. Grave robbers would not have removed the burial cloths from the dead body of Jesus before they took it away. Even if they had removed the burial cloths, they would not have placed them in some orderly fashion. That disciple may have supposed the Risen Lord had arranged them or simply passed through them as he rose to new life.

But possibly he believed because he saw not only with his eyes but also with his heart. His love for Jesus deepened his vision. That is something we may experience in small ways. For example, we see our deceased grandmother's favorite chair and we feel her presence and almost picture her sitting there once more.

Or it may be that the reason that disciple saw and was the first to believe was because God blessed him with the gift of faith. The one most beloved by the Lord was one first blessed with faith in the Resurrection.

Today, our world has people who see the Resurrection in different ways. There are those like Mary of Magdala who are led by logic and conclude that the body of Jesus was carried off. There are those like Peter who are uncertain what to believe. And there are those like the beloved disciple whose hearts have been touched by the Lord and blessed with faith. They are the ones who see and believe! They are ones who joyfully proclaim, "The Lord is Risen! Alleluia!"

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Happy Easter!

May the Risen Lord touch your life with his presence and peace!