

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Passion / Palm Sunday, April 13, 2014

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.

WHAT IS THE WORST?

What is the worst part of growing old or of being seriously ill for a long period of time?

Is it dealing with physical pain?

Is it losing our independence and sense of control?

Is it seeing our financial resources slowly drain away?

Is it coping with depression and a dread of what tomorrow might bring?

Certainly it could be any of those things. But there is something else that may be even more difficult. That is dealing with a sense of abandonment, the feeling of being deserted and forgotten by family and friends.

As we age, we begin to lose the people who fill our hearts. We lose parents, siblings, friends, spouses, and sometimes even our children to death. We see the number of people who are walking with us in our journey through life diminish. We may feel as if we are the last ones left marching in the parade.

A debilitating, lingering illness can also result in a sense of abandonment. Over time the number of people who visit, call, or send cards gets smaller and smaller. People get involved with their own concerns and life moves on without us. In addition, an illness may be a disquieting reminder to others of their own mortality.

Dealing with a sense of abandonment may be the most difficult thing in life to endure. It certainly was a horrible part of the suffering of Jesus. As we hear in this Sunday's account of the Passion of the Lord (Matthew 26:14-27:66), Jesus is abandoned by individuals and groups of people as he makes his way to the cross.

Judas abandons Jesus. He leaves his company and betrays Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

The disciples abandon Jesus as he is arrested in the garden. "Then all the disciples left him and fled."

Peter abandons Jesus three different times as he vehemently denies being one of his followers. "He began to curse and to swear, 'I do not know the man.'"

The crowds, who had welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem days earlier, abandon him and cry for his crucifixion as they are spurred on by the chief priests and elders.

Pilate abandons Jesus to the angry crowd. Even though he knows "that it was out of envy that they had handed him over." Jesus is abandoned by Roman justice as Pilate washes his hands of a just man.

Then as he hangs on the cross, Jesus has the most intense feeling of abandonment of all as he cries out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" Jesus is left feeling like an abandoned, abused orphan in a hostile world.

Yet Jesus was not alone. The Father was with him. As the centurion proclaimed when he saw the marvels that followed the death of Jesus, "Truly, this man was the Son of God." A fact wonderfully confirmed in the glory of the Resurrection.

While Jesus had human feelings of abandonment, those feelings were not the reality. The Father was always with his Beloved Son. Jesus was never alone.

The same thing can be said for all those who have been made children of God in the waters of baptism. Despite what we may feel, God never abandons his children. God is always with us!

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