

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, April 22, 2018

Fourth Sunday of Easter

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.

DIVERSITY & RELIGION

We live in a time in which diversity is highly valued. Laws and regulations mandate certain levels of diversity. Businesses and educational institutions try to ensure that their populations reflect the many categories of diversity proposed by society.

Those categories of diversity include race, color, gender, sexual orientation, place of birth, ethnic background, religion, age, disability, and socioeconomic status.

In this era of diversity no one group or category can be judged more highly than another. To say a certain group is superior is to expose one to charges of bias and bigotry. All are good, none are better.

This idea of diversity appears to have affected people's view of religion. Whether a person is Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Mormon, or a follower of any other religion makes no difference. All beliefs are of equal value and to claim one is better is the equivalent of saying one race or ethnic group is superior to another.

Such an understanding of diversity when it comes to religious belief is contradicted by what we hear in this Sunday's readings.

In the First Reading (Acts 4:8-12), Saint Peter tells his Jewish listeners that his cure of a crippled man was done through the power of Jesus Christ the Nazorean. Peter then boldly asserts, "There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved." As Jesus himself put it, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

In Sunday's Gospel Reading (John 10:11-18), Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. "I know mine and mine know me."

Jesus then speaks of the day when the sheep who do not belong to his fold will hear his voice and then "there will be one flock, one shepherd." Jesus makes a distinction between those who are part of his flock today and those he hopes to gather to himself in the future. All the sheep are not the same.

Knowing Jesus Christ, believing in him, being part of his flock is critically important. If it were not, why would Jesus have sent out his disciples to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth? Why would Christians down through the ages have sought to tell others about Jesus and to bring them into a relationship with Christ and his Church? And why, in the first place, would the Son of God have taken on flesh and come among us?

While people may claim all religions are the same, that is not the case. There is only one religion founded on Jesus Christ, the Risen One. In him, we are brought into a new relationship

with God. In him, we are healed of all those things that cripple our spirits. In him, we are assured of new and everlasting life.

While our society promotes diversity in all things, including religion, today's readings proclaim Jesus Christ is the one way to salvation. "There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved."

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*May the Risen Lord continue to bless you
with his presence and peace
during this Easter Season!*