

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, April 24, 2016

Fifth 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.

BE SURE TO HEAR THIS!

"If you expect to graduate from this high school, you need to study, to work hard, and to apply yourselves." If a principal were to say that to the entire student body during an assembly at the start of a new school year, her words would have little impact. The students would hear them as just something a principal was supposed to say.

But if that principal were to call a small group of seniors down to her office at the end of April and say the exact same thing, her words would make a definite impression. Those students would realize that their graduation from high school was no sure thing. They would know they were being specifically warned to buckle down and hit the books.

How we hear words depends upon who says them, to whom they are addressed, and when they are spoken.

In this Sunday's Gospel (John 13: 31-33a, 34-35), Jesus says, "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another."

We can hear those words of Jesus as a general command addressed to all people. But Jesus announces his "new commandment" not to everyone but to a select group of people at a very significant moment.

Jesus speaks those words to his chosen disciples at the Last Supper soon after washing their feet in a striking gesture of service and humility.

Furthermore, Jesus makes it clear that this new commandment is meant specifically for his disciples for they are the ones who have personally experienced his love.

He sought them out, cared for them, taught them, showed them patience and understanding, forgave them, revealed himself to them, gave them a share in his ministry, allowed them into his heart, and brought them into a relationship with his Father.

In turn, that is how they are to treat one another. By doing so "all will know that you are my disciples."

This Sunday as the Gospel is proclaimed Jesus will again speak those words he first spoke to his disciples at the Last Supper. But he will speak them to us as we gather in our parish churches for Mass. We are the ones who faithfully come Sunday after Sunday. We are ones who have experienced his love, mercy, and presence in our lives. We are his disciples today.

And what we have experienced is what our fellow disciples—our fellow Christians, our fellow parishioners—must experience from us. We are to be caring, compassionate, understanding, forgiving, charitable, merciful, and concerned about the physical and spiritual welfare of those Christians whose opinions we share and those whose views and attitudes clash with our own,

those we think of as upright and those whose moral compass seems skewed, those whose faith we admire and those whose faith we question, those we would like as friends and those who test our patience.

This Sunday, Jesus, our “principal,” calls us before him and says directly to us, “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples.”

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Happy Easter Season!