

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, April 26, 2020

The Third 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.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than eleven years.

HEARD DIFFERENTLY

Sometimes a story that we have heard before takes on a different meaning because of what is happening in our lives.

That is true of the story that we hear in this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 24:13-35), the story of the two disciples walking to Emmaus that first Easter Sunday afternoon. We hear of Cleopas and another disciple walking side by side as they make their way home. Jesus, their master and teacher, had been crucified and buried. Dejected and disappointed, they are returning to their former lives.

As they walk along, a stranger catches up with them and asks them what they are talking about. The two disciples tell him about what has happened in Jerusalem and how their hopes in Jesus had been shattered. They reveal that they "were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel."

The stranger then points out that the scriptures predicted that the long-awaited Messiah would suffer.

When they reach Emmaus, those disciples invite the stranger to stay with them and join them for supper. He accepts and they sit down to eat. As the stranger says the blessing, they come to recognize the Risen Lord.

On a human level, that story is about nothing extraordinary. It is about people walking and talking together and allowing a passing stranger to take part in their conversation. It is about two people inviting a new acquaintance to join them for something to eat.

But today, allowing a stranger to walk next to you and inviting that stranger to sit at your table is not so ordinary. In this time of the coronavirus, a stranger is a possible threat, a possible carrier of the disease. Showing hospitality has been replaced with social distancing.

Sunday's Gospel reminds us of simple human activities we would not have given a second thought to some months ago.

The Emmaus story not only reminds us how our social interactions have changed, it also reminds us of what has happened in our spiritual lives.

Since mid-March, we have been unable to gather for Mass with our fellow parishioners, with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We have been unable to listen to the Lord who speaks to us as the scriptures are proclaimed in the assembly and broken open in the homily.

We have been unable to gather at the table of the Lord where the priest does what Jesus did at the Last Supper and in Sunday's Gospel passage. There Jesus "took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them."

Sharing the life-giving Body and Blood of Christ, being united with him and his Church in a "Holy Communion," has been suspended. We are deprived of the Eucharist not by threat of persecution, but by an unseen threat even more deadly.

Sunday's Gospel reminds us of the simple human interactions that we now miss, interactions to which we never gave a second thought.

Even more importantly it reminds us of the liturgy that we can no longer freely celebrate with one another – the liturgy in which the Lord warms our hearts with his Word, and where he comes to be with us in the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist.

This Sunday, we will hear the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in a very different way.

But may the day soon come when walking side by side and sharing at the table of the Lord will again be a normal part of our lives.

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