

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, April 29, 2018**

***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.

## **CONSISTENT EFFORT**

In most cases, success only comes with consistent and constant effort.

Musicians need to practice on a regular basis if they hope to succeed. They cannot devote just an hour a week to developing their talent and hope to become accomplished artists.

A person who wants to speak a foreign language must stay with it day in and day out despite the frustration that comes with trying to learn new words and grammatical constructions.

And of course, those who want to lose weight and better their health need to remain on a proper diet and exercise consistently. Working out once a week and eating the right foods every other day or so will not bring the desired results.

To succeed, we need to remain committed to whatever we hope to achieve.

In this Sunday's Gospel (John 15:1-8), Jesus uses an image from agriculture to emphasize the consistent and constant effort that is required if we want to grow spiritually and strengthen our relationship with him.

Jesus says, "Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me."

A branch cannot thrive if it is cut away from the vine. It needs to have a consistent connection with the life-giving vine. The same is true in our spiritual life.

We need to have a consistent and ongoing connection with the Lord. Such a connection happens through the Church. The Church is the way we remain connected to Jesus Christ.

As Pope Francis said, "We are not isolated and we are not Christians on an individual basis, each one on his or her own, no, our Christian identity is to belong! We are Christians because we belong to the Church.....There are those who believe they can maintain a personal, direct and immediate relationship with Jesus Christ outside the communion and the mediation of the Church. These are dangerous and harmful temptations. These are, as the great Paul VI said, absurd dichotomies." (*Pope Francis, General Audience, Wednesday, June 25, 2014*)

The Church provides that connection to Jesus Christ through the celebration of the Sacraments, the proclamation of God's Word, programs of faith formation, opportunities to engage in works of mercy and compassion, and above all through the celebration of Sunday Mass.

In our day, more and more people seem to be drifting away from the Church, drifting away from the place where the connection is made between Jesus, the life-giving vine, and the individual Christian. When that connection is broken, as Jesus tells us, the branch withers and dies.

It is strange that while people understand the necessity of consistent and constant effort to master music, to learn a foreign language, or to improve their health, many people fail to see that same necessity when it comes to remaining strong in their relationship with Christ and his Church.

“Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit... Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither.”

© 2018 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski

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