

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, May 1, 2016

Sixth 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.

THE NEVER FADING CHURCH

Most movements and organizations seem to fade and diminish over time.

Some lose their initial enthusiasm as their founders are replaced by a second, a third, and a fourth generation of leaders who are more managers than prophetic figures.

Some splinter because of internal disputes and conflicts over philosophy and purpose.

Some collapse because of disagreements over leadership and control.

Some are weakened by internal corruption, theft, greed, and embezzlement.

Some lose their reputation and status because those in authority are revealed to be less than paragons of virtue.

Some dissolve as they are replaced by newer movements that attract the attention of the public, what is "in" today is "out" tomorrow.

We all know of organizations and movements that once were powerful but have weakened over time and are now only a memory.

However, there is one movement, one organization that has not faded over time. That organization is the Church. It has existed for some 2,000 years. Despite challenges, persecutions, scandals, social changes, and political turmoil, it continues.

That is because the Church has never lost the presence, guidance, and direction of its founder and its source of life.

In this Sunday's Gospel (John 14:23-29) we hear Jesus promise to remain with his Church. On the night of his Last Supper he says, "I am going away and I will come back to you." Jesus returned to his disciples after his Resurrection and even now the Risen Lord remains with us.

Through the Holy Spirit the Lord continues to be with his Church. In fact, through the Spirit, Jesus is even more powerfully present to his followers than he was when he walked with them in the land of Judah. Then he was bound by space and time, now his Spirit fills the world and touches all those who believe in him.

We see the action of the Spirit powerfully at work in our First Reading (Acts 15:1-2, 22-29). Guided by the Spirit of Jesus the growing Christian community resolves an issue that could have torn it apart. Should Gentile believers in Jesus be required to follow the customs and rituals of the Jewish people, the first believers in Christ?

Through the action of the Holy Spirit both sides, after "no little dissension and debate," come to an agreement that respects the sensibilities of the Jewish believers and at the same time acknowledges that the Gospel brings a new freedom, a new way of relating to God. This

agreement was said to be the decision not only of the leaders of the Church but also “the decision of the Holy Spirit.” The Risen Lord acted through his Spirit to guide his Church in dealing with a new situation.

The same thing remains true today. We do not have to wring our hands wondering what Jesus would do, what advice he would he give, how he would expect us to respond to problems, challenges, and the changing circumstances of our day, we need only open ourselves to the Holy Spirit, to the Spirit of the Risen Lord!

The Church is the only organization always in touch with the life-giving vision and guidance of its founder. That is why the Church continues!

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Happy Easter Season!