

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, May 3, 2015**

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on the Gospel Reading 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.

## **FOLLOW HIS ADVICE!**

Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Cut back on your consumption of red meat.

Drink plenty of water.

Avoid stress.

Get at least seven hours of sleep each night.

Don't smoke.

Limit your consumption of alcoholic beverages.

When our personal physician gives us such advice we accept it and try to follow it. We trust that our doctor has our best interests in mind. We also accept his or her advice because we believe doctors know what they are talking about. They have gone to medical school, they have studied the human body, and they have experience in treating patients. They know what works.

However, when it comes to the spiritual side of life, many people are not so willing to listen to the advice they are given – even when that advice comes from Jesus Christ, the ultimate expert on spirituality. Who knows more about spirituality than Jesus Christ, the one who is the way, the truth and the life?

In this Sunday's Gospel (John 15:1-8), Jesus tells us what we absolutely need to do if we wish to be spiritually healthy, if we wish to flourish as Christians. Jesus tells us that we need to be connected to him just as a branch needs to be connected to the vine in order to have life.

Jesus says, "Remain in me, as I remain in you. 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."

Jesus then repeats what he has just said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither."

Obviously Jesus wants to make it abundantly clear that we need to remain in him if we are to be spiritually alive and bear the fruit that shows itself in love of him and love of neighbor. In fact, Jesus uses the word "remain" eight times in the eight verses that make up this Sunday's Gospel. Being connected with Jesus is critical.

We remain in Jesus when we are part of the Church, part of the living Body of Christ. It is in the Church that Jesus speaks to us as we hear the scriptures proclaimed and preached – scriptures that not only comfort us but also challenge us to turn away from selfishness and sin.

It is in the Church that Jesus nourishes us through the sacraments, above all through the Eucharist in which he gives us a share in his very life and unites us with himself in one “holy communion.”

It is in the Church that Jesus supports us through our fellow Christians who walk with us on our journey of life and who give us examples of holiness, sacrifice, generosity, and service.

It is in the Church that Jesus also tests our faith as we deal not only with saints but also with sinners. We deal with people who are not always easy to love, who make demands, who fail to live as they should, who need forgiveness. In others words, we deal with imperfect people like ourselves.

Yet despite what Jesus says about being connected and remaining in him, some people deny the importance of being an active part of the Church. They claim they can be Christians without being part of the Christian community, without remaining part of the Body of Christ. They can be spiritual without being religious, without being Church-connected. However, thinking like that does not seem to fit the advice that Jesus gives us in this Sunday’s Gospel.

People who do not follow the advice of their doctor run the risk of injuring their health. People who do not follow the advice of Jesus, the Divine Physician, run the risk of ruining something even more important!

*“Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.”*

© 2015 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski