

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, May 8, 2016

Seventh 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 CREDENTIALS

When a person is appointed ambassador to a foreign country, that individual does not take up his or her post until after presenting the appropriate credentials.

In a formal ceremony the new ambassador hands over those official documents to the leader of the country where he or she has been assigned.

Those credentials introduce the ambassador and testify that he or she is the officially designated representative of the sending nation. With the presentation of these credentials the ambassador takes his or her post and gains diplomatic immunity.

Jesus our Lord and Savior could be seen as God's ambassador sent to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel and to reveal God's mercy and love. As God's ambassador, Jesus makes God present in this world. As Jesus told Philip the Apostle, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)

During his earthly ministry, Jesus was God's ambassador and he continues to hold that position. He continues to make God present through Word and Sacrament and through his Church.

But before the world can accept Jesus as God's ambassador and acknowledge his words as God's truth, it needs to see some verification that Jesus is the one sent by God.

In this Sunday's Gospel (John 17:20-26), Jesus reveals what will serve as the credentials that the world requires. In that Gospel Jesus prays that all his disciples may be one just as he and Father are one so "that the world may believe that you sent me."

Jesus then reinforces that idea as he continues his prayer to the Father. Jesus asks that his followers "may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me."

As Jesus prays to his heavenly Father, we learn that Jesus wants *us* to be the credentials, the living credentials, that he presents to the world to show he is the one sent by God.

If people today seem unwilling to believe who Jesus is and unwilling to accept his message, it may be because they find his credentials less than convincing.

Rather than seeing the followers of Jesus united in mutual love, care, and concern for one another, they see disunity, disharmony, suspicion, mistrust and sometimes even hostility among those who call themselves Christians.

They see followers of Christ broken into competing groups – Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Orthodox, etc. Within those groups they notice further divisions based on styles of prayer, types of liturgical music, adherence to certain devotions, perceived religious experiences, and approaches to the scriptures.

That disunity affects not only the universal church, but also dioceses, parishes, and even the domestic church that we call the family.

Imagine for a moment if all Christians were united as one, just as Jesus and the Father are united in mutual love.

If we were all united in faith, hope, and love, united in our concern for one another, and united in our efforts to build up God's kingdom, what an impact we would have. People would be so impressed by our lives that they would be open to accepting Jesus and his Gospel.

This Sunday Jesus prays that we will be the credentials that the world needs so it can be certain that Jesus is the divine ambassador, the one sent from God.

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Happy Easter Season!