

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, May 11, 2025

The Fourth 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 sixteen years.

KNOWING HIM, KNOWING US

Faith formation classes, religious instructions, sacramental preparation programs, scripture sharing sessions, weekend retreats, days of recollection, prayer group meetings, parish missions, and other spiritual events have one major purpose. They exist to help us grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord and to deepen our relationship with him.

As in any relationship, that is an ongoing process. No one can ever say that he or she completely knows another human being. That is also true in our relationship with Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God.

How we relate to Jesus, how we address him in prayer, how we understand his words, and how we allow his Gospel to direct our lives, all change over time. Our understanding of Jesus is not the same as it was when we received our First Communion or made our Confirmation.

The more time we spend with Jesus, the deeper our relationship becomes. We move from knowing him as a person that other people told us about to knowing him as our Risen Lord and Good Shepherd who watches over us and leads us to eternal life.

This is true of the first disciples. The more they were with Jesus, heard his words and saw his wondrous deeds, the more they grew in their understanding of Jesus. Peter came to acknowledge that he was "the Messiah, the Son of the living God," and Thomas proclaimed him to be "Lord and God."

At the same time the apostles were learning about their Master, Jesus, in his human nature, was learning something about them. For example, he came to see certain qualities in Peter that led him to choose Peter as the rock on which he would build his Church. He noticed that James and John were overly ambitious and needed to learn that serving was more important than holding positions of power.

Just as Jesus observed his apostles as they spent time together, we need to realize Jesus is observing us. This is particularly true when we participate in the liturgy, receive the Sacraments, attend religious activities, take part in spiritual programs, and do all the other things that consciously draw us into the presence of Jesus.

We need to appreciate that we are not just learning more about Jesus in these religious activities and growing in our relationship with him. Jesus too is listening to our words of prayer, sitting next to us as we share our hopes and dreams, assuring of his help as we express our needs, and rejoicing as we confidently open our hearts before him and let ourselves be known.

That is why Jesus can say in this Sunday's Gospel (John 10:27-30), "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me." Our faith is not just a matter of our knowing more about Jesus, it is realizing that Jesus knows us!

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