

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Pentecost Sunday, May 24, 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.

HOLY BREATH

When a baby is born, it is pushed from the watery environment of its mother's womb into the outside world. Within a few seconds, a critical thing must happen. The newborn has to take its first breath. It must begin to take in life-giving oxygen. A baby's first breath brings joy to all in the delivery room. Breathing means life.

This Sunday's Gospel for the Solemnity of Pentecost (John 20:19-23) involves life and breath. The reading relates the events of the First Easter Sunday evening. Its verses may sound familiar since they were part of a longer passage that was proclaimed on the Second Sunday of Easter.

In Sunday's reading we hear how the Risen Lord appeared to his apostles who were hiding in fear behind securely locked doors. The Lord "breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.'" Jesus blew the breath of the Spirit upon them and commissioned them to be agents of forgiveness, mercy, and new life.

In a sense those apostles were like infants in the womb unsure of what was waiting for them outside their hiding place. Enlivened with the breath of the Spirit they go forth to announce the Good News.

The action of the Lord that first Easter Sunday evening may bring to mind the action of God when he created the first human being. In the Book of Genesis, we are told, "Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7) In breathing upon the apostles, the Risen Lord brought his Church to life. It became his living presence in the world.

This Sunday we also hear Luke's account of the coming of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 23:1-10) Luke tells us that on the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, the Spirit came in tongues of fire and as a strong driving wind that filled the house where the disciples were gathered.

That mighty wind could be seen as the breath of God blowing from the heavens through the streets of Jerusalem until it rested upon those first disciples. It filled them with wisdom and courage and drove them into the streets where they "began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim."

God has breathed that same Holy Spirit upon us. At our Baptism, the Spirit of God came to dwell within us. We became temples of the Holy Spirit. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1265*). At our Confirmation, we were strengthened by the Holy Spirit to be bold and courageous witnesses of Christ in the world. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1303*).

This Sunday, the Solemnity of Pentecost reminds us of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our Church and in our personal lives. A simple way we can continue to recall the presence and the

power of the Holy Spirit is by concentrating on our breathing. By stopping for a few moments to consider our breathing we can remember the Holy Spirit that was breathed upon us. Slowing repeating a phrase, such as “Come Holy Spirit,” can make that moment even more prayerful and reflective.

We may not see tongues of fire or feel a driving wind from heaven blowing into our rooms, but each of us has experienced air coming in and out of our lungs since we took our first breath.

Stop! Take a deep breath! Remember the Spirit of God!

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