

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, May 25, 2025**

***The 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.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than sixteen years.

## **AN ONGOING CHURCH!**

“The Catholic Church is the oldest continuously functioning institution in the world.”

That statement was made more than once during the world-wide coverage of the funeral of Pope Francis. It is a fact that we can sometimes fail to fully appreciate, but one that was recognized as presidents, prime ministers, kings and queens, ambassadors and diplomats, religious leaders, and hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children gathered to show their respect and love for Pope Francis, the humble man who led the Church for the past 12 years.

The Church, which has existed continually for 2,000 years, was founded by Jesus Christ on the rock of Peter, and it has been led by his successors throughout the centuries. This Church has outlived empires, cultures, and civilizations. It has survived persecutions, scandals, and controversies. It has been populated by saints and sinners, ardent believers and wayward disciples. It has proclaimed the Gospel in thousands of languages by word of mouth and by every means of human communication and form of social media.

The Church continues to exist age after age since it is far more than just a human institution. We see that highlighted in this Sunday's scripture readings.

In our Second Reading (Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23), the Church is described as the heavenly Jerusalem that gleams with the splendor of God. Its city wall rests on twelve courses of stone inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. It has three gates on each of its four sides allowing people from all four corners of the world to enter. This holy city, filled with the light of God's indwelling presence, draws all people out of the darkness.

In our Gospel (John 14:23-29), Jesus promises his disciples that if they keep his word, he will continue to dwell with them. They will be given the Holy Spirit to guide and direct them and be blessed with his peace that overcomes all fear. That Spirit has led the Church to make decisions that have allowed it to grow and to meet the challenges of every age.

We see that dramatically illustrated in Sunday's First Reading (Acts 15:1-2, 22-29). There the Church was faced with deciding whether the Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, had to be circumcised and follow the Torah as did all faithful Jews. Was faith in the Risen Lord a part of Judaism or was it something new?

Because of that question, “there arose no little dissension and debate.” It was a fundamental issue that was decided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As the Church boldly proclaimed, “It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these

necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage.”

Enlightened by the Spirit, the Church moved beyond the practices of its first Jewish disciples. It came to see itself as part of a new covenant in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is true to say that the Catholic Church is the oldest continuously functioning institution in the world. But it might be better to say that the Catholic Church is the ongoing way that the Risen Lord has chosen to walk with us until the end of time.

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