

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, May 29, 2016

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

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.

MORE THAN TUNA SANDWICHES!

Imagine you were in a crowd of some 5,000 people who had gathered in a seldom used athletic field to listen to a charismatic speaker. You were so caught up in what you were hearing that you paid little attention to the hunger pains in your stomach that were getting sharper as the day progressed.

When the program was over you realized that the place where you had assembled was miles away from any restaurant, diner, or convenience store where you could buy something to eat. You and all those with you were tired, hungry, and wondering what to do next.

Suddenly the person who had held your attention throughout the day came forward and announced that he and his assistants would feed you before you started for home.

Then as you watched, someone placed five loaves of whole wheat bread and two cans of tuna fish on a table that was next to the speaker's podium. The individual who had held you spellbound throughout the day, then came forward and pronounced a blessing over the bread and tuna. He tore open the wrapping on the loaves of bread, pulled the easy-open tabs on the cans of tuna, and told his assistants to start serving the food.

You would have thought the speaker was crazy. But as you watched tuna fish sandwiches began to be distributed to hundreds and then thousands of people and eventually one of those sandwiches was in your hands.

When everyone had eaten, those who had been serving the food gathered up 12 large containers of leftovers. There was more food remaining after everyone had eaten than there had been at the start.

There would be no doubt in your mind that you had witnessed a miracle. You might have found yourself more impressed by what you saw than by anything you heard that day.

That contemporary version of Jesus feeding an immense crowd with just five loaves and two fish can give us some appreciation of the impact that miracle must have had on the people who witnessed it.

That miraculous feeding certainly impressed each of the Gospel writers for it is the only miracle of Jesus to appear in each of the four Gospels. In his account John tells us that the people were so amazed by what Jesus had done they wanted "to come and carry him off to make him king." (John 6:15)

As we listen to Luke's account in this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 9:11-17), we will hear how Jesus took the loaves and fish, blessed them, broke them, and then gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people.

Those four actions of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving were later repeated by Jesus at the Last Supper. As Mark tells us, “While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take it; this is my body.” (Mark 14:22)

Those very actions are repeated at every Mass. Acting through the priest, the Lord Jesus takes the bread offered by the people, blesses it, breaks it, and then gives to the people for their spiritual nourishment. Through his priest, the Lord does the same with the wine.

As we receive that consecrated bread and wine, Paul tells us in Sunday’s Second Reading (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) that we remember Jesus, we celebrate our “new covenant” in his blood, and we “proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.”

We also become what we receive – the Body and Blood of Christ. Each time we share the Eucharist, we are transformed more and more into the living presence of Christ in our world.

It must have been unbelievable to see a crowd of thousands fed with a few loaves of bread and a few fish, but the miracle we witness at every Mass is far more amazing!

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