

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, June 1, 2025**

## ***The Ascension of the Lord***

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.

### **NOT GONE**

A mother and father watch as their youngest child leaves home to attend a college located halfway across the country.

A family bids farewell to their long-time neighbors who are relocating to Florida.

An employee learns that a co-worker who has been a mentor and dear friend is being transferred to an overseas subsidiary.

These are certainly not happy occasions. None of us want people who have been a significant part of our lives to leave us. Though we can stay in contact with them through various forms of digital communication and social media, nothing can take the place of human contact and interaction. We would never joyfully celebrate their leaving us.

Yet that seems to be what the disciples did when the Lord left them. In the Gospel (Luke 24:46-53) we are told that Jesus parted from them "and was taken up to heaven. They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple praising God." The Church echoes their joy as it celebrates the Ascension of the Lord this Sunday since the Ascension is far more than a going away.

In our First Reading (Acts 1:1-11), we are told that after his Resurrection, the Risen Lord appeared to his disciples. He ate with them, taught them, and instructed them to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. After a period of 40 days, he was lifted up to heaven and taken from their sight.

The Risen Lord would no longer be present to his disciples as he had been when he was on earth. From that moment he would be with them and his Church in a new and expansive way, in a way no longer constrained by the limits of time and space.

The Risen Lord would be with them and with us through his Spirit that would come upon us. That Spirit enables us to hear the voice of the Risen Lord in the scriptures, to recognize his presence in the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist, to experience his saving action in the Sacraments, and to feel his loving embrace in the Church, the living Body of Christ.

In the Feast of the Ascension, the Church marks the end of the historical presence of Jesus, but more importantly it celebrates the way the Risen Lord is with us today and will be with us until he returns in glory. As the angels asked the disciples, "Why are you standing there looking up at the sky?" If we look with the eyes of faith we will see the Risen Lord with us through the Holy Spirit. As we are told in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "The Spirit manifests the Risen Lord" (#737).

The Ascension also assures us that we have a friend not only on earth but also in heaven. As we profess in the Creed, we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ “ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.” When we die, we do not go into everlasting darkness, but we go to be with the Lord who has gone before us.

We are sad when people we love leave us. However, the Ascension is not about the Lord leaving us—it is about him remaining with us in a new and wonderful way. As he assured us, “I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

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