

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 2017**

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.

## **SPIRIT EMPOWERED**

Which of the following feasts of the Church is the most important: Christmas, Easter, or Pentecost?

Christmas is certainly a good answer. If the Son of God had not taken on flesh and been born of the Virgin Mary, there would be no such thing as Christianity. Jesus Christ would never have walked this earth and proclaimed the Gospel.

Easter might be an equally good response, and perhaps even better. If Jesus Christ had not risen from the dead after his crucifixion, he might have been forgotten within a few generations. Or perhaps he might have been remembered only as a great philosopher or moral teacher. The resurrection sets Jesus apart from all humanity.

However, this Sunday's feast of Pentecost may be the most important of all. Pentecost celebrates the gift of the Spirit that Jesus bestows on his disciples. Without that gift, the messages of Christmas and Easter would not have survived these past 2,000 years.

In Sunday's Gospel (John 20:19-23), Jesus says to his disciples, "'As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

Jesus blesses his disciples with the same Spirit that descended upon him at his baptism and that guided and empowered him in his ministry. As Matthew tells us in his Gospel, "After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him." (Matthew 3:16).

The Spirit that enabled Jesus to proclaim the Kingdom, to forgive sin, to heal the sick, to offer hope, and to bring humanity into a new relationship with God was given to those disciples and to the Church on that first Pentecost.

In our First Reading (Act 2:1-12) the power of that Spirit is dramatically manifested as the disciples come out of hiding, rush into the streets of Jerusalem, and begin to preach the death and resurrection of Jesus. Those disciples "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim."

Then in our Second Reading (1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13), Paul dramatically proclaims the critical role of the Spirit. He tells us that it is the power of the Spirit that enables us to profess our faith, blesses us with spiritual gifts, and unites us as the Body of Christ. He states, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

That Holy Spirit continues to be with the disciples of Jesus. It comes upon us at Baptism, is strengthened at Confirmation, and continues to inspire the Church as it carries on the mission of Jesus.

The Spirit can be seen in the lives of generous, giving Christians who care for the sick, feed the hungry, sacrifice for their families, and support their parishes. It is evident in those who make time for prayer, share the Good News of the Gospel, work for justice and peace, and bring their faith into their schools, workplaces, and politics. And it shows itself in believers who are willing to forgive, and ready to follow the inspirations to goodness and kindness that come from the Spirit.

Of all the feasts of the Church, Pentecost is perhaps the most important for it celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit. Without the power of the Spirit the message of the Gospel and the Church of Christ would have faded into history long ago.

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