

## ***LOOKING TO SUNDAY®***

### **Pentecost Sunday, June 8, 2014**

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.

### **NOT THE OBVIOUS**

Sometimes the obvious answer is not always the right answer or the complete answer. Imagine that on the Feast of Pentecost you were asked what gift the Risen Lord gave his disciples. The obvious answer would be that he blessed them with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Yet the Gospel chosen for this Sunday's Feast of Pentecost (John 20:19-23) seems to indicate that response might not be the complete answer.

In that Gospel, the Risen Lord appears to his disciples for the first time on the evening of his Resurrection. He says to them, "Peace be with you." He then repeats that greeting and adds, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you....Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

The first gift the Risen Lord gives his disciples is the gift contained in the words, "Peace be with you."

Those were words they needed to hear. For the astonishing appearance of the Risen Lord, an event unprecedented in human history, did not bring peace to his disciples – certainly not at first. Standing before them was their beloved rabbi and teacher whom they had abandoned and disowned in his moment of need. They must have been overwhelmed with feelings of cowardice and shame, and apprehensive about what the Risen Lord might say and do because of their unfaithfulness.

Instead of being justifiably angry and sorely disappointed in his disciples he wished them peace and in doing so he restored their relationship. He showed them mercy and forgiveness. He reconnected and reconciled them to himself. That was the first gift the Risen Lord gave his disciples.

He then blessed them with the gift of the Holy Spirit so they might offer forgiveness and mercy to others. He made them ministers of reconciliation.

Yes, the Risen Lord blessed his disciples with the Holy Spirit so they might forgive sin. But first he blessed them with peace so they might know and understand the gift they were to share with others. "Peace be with you."

*© 2014 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski*