

## **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, August 19, 2018**

### ***The Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time***

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.

#### **FLESH AND BLOOD DONORS**

In the New Testament there are four accounts of Jesus giving his body and blood to his disciples at the Last Supper.

Where are those accounts?

If we were asked that question, we would most likely respond that they are found in the four gospels, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

However, that answer would not be completely correct. There are such accounts in Matthew (26:26-28), Mark (14:22-24), and Luke (22:19-20), but not in the Gospel of John. The fourth account is found in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (11:23-25).

However, John does tell us about the Eucharist in the sixth chapter of his Gospel that begins with Jesus feeding 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. This Sunday's Gospel comes from that chapter (John 6:51-58). There Jesus speaks about eating his body and drinking his blood.

Jesus tells those listening to him in the synagogue in Capernaum, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day."

Jesus then repeats that very same message, "For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him."

In these words of Jesus, we find the understanding of the Eucharist that the other New Testament writers place in their accounts of the Last Supper.

Jesus tells us that he will give his flesh and blood that we might have life. He certainly did that by his death on the cross and he continues to do that as we share at the altar table.

Perhaps one way we might grow in our appreciation of those words of Jesus is by considering how people today give their flesh and blood so that others might live. People give of themselves by making blood and organ donations.

By giving blood to organizations like the Red Cross, blood donors help people to live. They save lives.

Giving blood is an unselfish act. Certainly, that was profoundly the case with Jesus who poured out his blood for us on the cross, and who continues to give of his blood as we share the consecrated wine at Mass.

We also have instances of people giving of their flesh, giving part of their body to another person so that individual might continue to live. We see that in living donors who give part of their liver or one of their kidneys to people suffering debilitating, life-threatening diseases.

Such giving is certainly sacrificial, and it reminds us of the sacrifice of Jesus whose crucified body proclaimed the depth of his love for us. Jesus continues to give of his body as we share the consecrated bread of the Eucharist.

By sharing his body and blood we are strengthened to overcome the effects of sin and we begin to share in the life of God that leads to everlasting life. As Jesus tells us, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life."

While John has no Last Supper account of Jesus telling his disciples to eat his body and to drink his blood, the words of Jesus that we hear this Sunday are just as profound and amazing.

*© 2018 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski*