

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®
Sunday, September 14, 2025
The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

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.

SEEING THE CRUCIFIX

Today an increasing number of people claim to be atheists. They do not believe in the existence of God. The main reason many people give for their lack of faith is the amount of suffering, pain, and evil in the world.

Such people ask how can anyone believe in a good and loving God when a mother of four young children dies of breast cancer; when a man volunteering time to work with recovering alcoholics is killed by a drunk driver; when a group of people praying in a church are hacked to death by religious extremists; when wars claim the lives of countless innocent civilians; when famine, disease, and natural disasters destroy entire communities; and when corruption, hypocrisy, and wrongdoing seem to infect every level of society.

Non-believers reason that if there were a God, that God would certainly do something about the darkness in this world. God would make things right: the good would be rewarded and the evil would be punished.

In the face of these objections, our Catholic faith boldly proclaims the existence of God to an increasingly disbelieving world. As it does so, it does not shy away from acknowledging the evil, injustice, and darkness in our world. We see that dramatically illustrated in the image that the Church enshrines wherever its people gather in prayer: the image of the cross with the figure of the crucified Lord.

When we look upon the crucifix, we see the figure of an innocent man who fell victim to the sin and evil in this world. We see the Son of God, who we are told in our Second Reading (Philippians 2:6-11), "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross."

Looking at the crucifix can also remind us of the moments in our own lives when we felt as if we were upon that cross—moments when suffering, pain, sickness, lies, betrayals, and false accusations victimized us and made us question if God had abandoned us.

Such pain and suffering exist in our world not because there is no God, but because God created men and women with free will. Humanity has used that freedom to make choices that have given birth to the evil and sin that darken our lives and scar the world that the Creator found "very good."

However, when we as people of faith see the crucifix, we see more than suffering, pain, and death. We see that Good Friday image of the crucifix in the light of the Resurrection.

We do not see defeat. We see beyond the crucifix to Christ's victory over suffering, sin, and death—a victory in which we share. For as the Church tells us in Entrance Antiphon of Sunday's Mass, "We should glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life, and resurrection, through whom we are saved and delivered."

If we did not believe this, we would not be placing crucifixes in our churches and in our homes, we would not be celebrating a feast entitled, "The Exaltation of the Holy Cross."

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