

# ***LOOKING TO SUNDAY®***

**Sunday, November 29, 2015**

## ***The First Sunday of Advent***

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.

### **ADVENT ANTICIPATION**

If you were to ask Catholics the meaning of Advent, they would most likely respond that Advent is a season of anticipation before Christmas. It's a time of joy and excitement as we prepare to celebrate the day Jesus was born.

Even secular society sees these weeks before December 25 as a time of anticipation. Children anticipate the arrival of Santa Claus and the gifts he will bring. Families anticipate being together and honoring cherished traditions.

Business owners anticipate a record-breaking volume of sales from in store and online purchases. The post office and shipping firms anticipate delivering hundreds of millions of cards and packages.

Restaurants anticipate catering a full schedule of Christmas and holiday parties. And everyone anticipates increased traffic, longer waiting lines, frayed nerves, and the pressure of getting everything done on time.

But for us as Christians, Advent is about anticipating something more than just Christmas. That is made clear in the Gospel passage chosen for the First Sunday of Advent. That reading (Luke 21:25-28, 34-36) is about the cataclysmic events that will accompany the return of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.

That aspect of Advent is easily forgotten as we prepare to focus on the memorable and cherished events of the Lord's first coming.

But it was not forgotten by the early Christians. They were focused not on Bethlehem but on the Lord's return in glory. They waited with eager anticipation for the Lord to come again and to usher in God's kingdom. All things would be set right; all people would live in peace with one another and with God. The Father's will would be done on earth as it was being done in heaven.

But such anticipation for the coming of the Lord has waned over time. After all, almost 2,000 years have passed since Jesus spoke of his return.

Yet imagine if all Christians lived each day with the anticipation of those early followers of Jesus, believing that this would be the day the Lord would return. Our priorities would change, as would our outlook on life. We would make certain we were focused on the persons and things that truly mattered. And we would be joyful knowing this might be day when the Lord who loves us would return.

It is interesting that at perhaps the busiest time of the year, when so much needs to be done before Christmas, Advent begins with a Gospel reading that reminds us of what truly demands our focus and anticipation.

As we pray at every Mass, may we “be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

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