

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, December 1, 2024

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.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than fifteen years.

PREDICTING THE FUTURE

Sunday, December 1, 2024 and Wednesday, January 1, 2025 have something in common: both deal with predictions about the future.

On January 1, New Years Day, the media focuses our attention on what may happen in the coming year. We hear predictions about the economy, politics, world affairs, technology, sports, religion, medicine, climate, cultural and demographic changes, etc.

We are all interested in predictions about the future, especially those that deal with our lives.

This Sunday, December 1, also focuses our attention on the future. The readings for this first day of Advent and this first day of the new liturgical year of 2025 look to the future.

In our First Reading (Jeremiah 33:14-16), we hear the prediction made by the Prophet Jeremiah that in a time to come God will restore the line of David by raising up "a just shoot...who shall do what is right and just in the land."

In our Second Reading (1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2), Paul urges the Christians at Thessalonica to be ready for the future coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and to make a greater effort to conduct themselves in a way pleasing to God.

In our Gospel (Luke 21:25-28, 34-36), Jesus predicts the events that will announce his second coming in glory. He says, "there will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay...People will die in fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world."

These words of Jesus seem particularly relevant since our world seems to be falling apart. There is war in Ukraine and in the Holy Land, and violence and terrorism in Nigeria, Sudan, and Haiti. There is increasing polarization among people, the continuing breakdown of the family, and a decline in moral values that were generally accepted just a generation or two ago. There is hunger and disease in a world that is yet to recover from the effects of the recent pandemic. God and religion are being pushed aside and societal structures are weakening.

Of course, such dire predictions have been made before. We hear them at the beginning of every Advent Season. Thankfully, they have not yet come to pass. If Jesus had come 100 years ago, the world would have ended, the kingdom of God would have come, and we would never have been created.

But we are here. And we continue to wait in hope for these Advent predictions to be fulfilled when Jesus returns in glory at the end of time or when he comes to us at the conclusion of our personal lives.

As we wait, Jesus tells us, “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life....Be vigilant at all times that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand firm before the Son of Man.”

This December 1 and January 1 we will listen to predictions about the future. The ones we will hear on New Year’s Day may or may not come to pass. But the predictions we hear this Sunday, December 1, come with a Divine Guarantee: The Lord Jesus will return in glory. In fact, if we look with the eyes of faith, we can see signs of his presence even today in Word and Sacrament and in his Church.

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