

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, December 8, 2013

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.

AN ADVENT DESERT

At this season of the year Santa is on people's minds as they shop for Christmas gifts. But for many people *sand*, as well as Santa, occupies their thoughts. The colder weather and approaching bleakness of winter bring thoughts of the sand and sea of southern Florida and the soft sandy beaches and clear warm waters of the Caribbean.

This Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 3:1-12) also brings sand to mind, the sand of the Judean desert. We hear of John the Baptist who "appeared preaching in the desert of Judea." It was in that desert that John, removed from everyday life and sustained by locusts and wild honey and dressed in garments of camel's hair, had been prepared by God to deliver a message of repentance.

"Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out" to John as he proclaimed, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Their acceptance of John's message was confirmed by their baptism in the Jordan.

This Advent, John the Baptist invites us to go into the "desert." There we can better hear his message of repentance, a message that invites us to a change of mind and heart so that we may be better prepared to welcome God into our lives.

Our "desert" may not be one filled with sand; rather it may involve carving out a digital and entertainment free time of quiet and reflection to consider our life as a Christian. Our "desert" may mean becoming involved in a charitable endeavor that increases our compassion for the poor and suffering who are near to the heart of God. Our "desert" may literally be a place where, removed from the frenzy of the mall and the demands of work, we can be alone with ourselves and with God.

This Gospel affirms what we know from so many other passages in scripture. The desert is the place where God likes to speak to his people. This Advent be sure to spend some time in the "desert."

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