

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, December 15, 2024

The Third 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.

A REASON FOR JOY

"Shout for joy...Sing joyfully...Be glad and exult with all your heart!" This is what the Prophet Zephaniah tells the people of Judah to do in Sunday's first reading (Zephaniah 3:14-18a).

This same directive is found in Sunday's Responsorial Psalm. The people are told, "Cry out with joy and gladness" and "Shout with exaltation."

This message appears again in the Second Reading (Philippians 4:4-7). Saint Paul orders the Christians at Philippi, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!"

In all three cases, the same reason is given for being joyful.

Zephaniah declares, "The Lord, your God, is in our midst, a mighty Savior." The Responsorial Psalm proclaims, "For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel." St. Paul announces, "The Lord is near."

That same merciful, loving, and caring God whose presence is proclaimed in these readings is also in our midst.

God comes and speaks to us as the scriptures are proclaimed and invites us to become one with him in the eucharist.

God stands near us when we gather with our fellow Christians to lift up our hearts to him in prayer and seek to serve others as Jesus did.

God is with us at every moment of our lives. He began to dwell in us at our baptism and has no wish to leave us. As the Lord told us, "I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Our readings this Sunday, remind us to be conscious that God is with us. This certainly is a reason for joy.

As we know, one of the greatest sources of joy in life is being with people who love us. That is certainly evident during the Christmas Season. We make every effort to be with family members and friends and others who love us.

It is not the Christmas presents we receive that truly matter but being in the presence of people who have made a place for us in their hearts.

Certainly, the people we hear about in Sunday's Gospel (Luke 3:10-18) wanted to be in the Lord's presence. That is why they sought out John's baptism of repentance and asked him what they needed to do to be ready to stand in the presence of the coming Messiah.

The Lord whom they awaited is with us in a real and personal way. As Pope Francis reminds us, “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you” (The Joy of the Gospel, #164).

The Lord is in our midst. That is why the scriptures call us to “be glad and exult” and to “cry out with joy and gladness”

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