

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, December 18, 2016

Fourth 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.

HIS DNA

Ancestry.com promises to help individuals discover their family tree by searching various sources of public information such as census and voter lists, birth and death records, marriage data, immigration lists, and so.

The company also offers a service that analyzes DNA samples submitted by clients. The analysis of this DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid, the hereditary material in humans) can help to uncover an individual's ethnic mix, possible connections to distant relatives, and other details about a person's unique family history.

The success of ancestry.com certainly shows that people have a great interest in knowing something about their genealogy and family history. People want to know who they are and where they come from.

Imagine for a moment that such a service as ancestry.com was available at the time of Jesus. If someone had searched the data bases available at the time they would have been able to discover something about the family history of Jesus. In fact, if we look at the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel and the third chapter of Luke's Gospel we will find the genealogical records of Jesus compiled by those two Gospel writers.

Matthew's record goes through 42 generations from Abraham to Joseph, the husband of Mary who was the mother of Jesus. Luke traces the family record backward 76 generations from Jesus, "the son, as was thought, of Joseph" to Adam, the son of God.

With the information found in those accounts, people could learn something about the family tree of Jesus. For example, they would see a relationship to the line of King David.

But imagine if someone had obtained a DNA sample of Jesus and sent that in for examination. His DNA would defy analysis. That would not be surprising since there never was nor will be a person like him. He was, as we proclaim in the Creed, "the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages....he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man."

The utter distinctiveness of Jesus is the point that Matthew is trying to make in this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 1: 18-24) for this Fourth and final Sunday of Advent. Matthew writes that "when his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit."

This occurrence leads Joseph to decide to separate from Mary and to have nothing more to do with her. His mind is changed only by an explanation from the heavens. In a dream, an angel

tells Joseph “do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.”

Twice in this Sunday’s Gospel, Matthew highlights the uniqueness of Jesus. He is like no other person. God is involved in his conception.

Most of our world considers Jesus to be a good man who touched others by his teachings, a man who embodied mercy and compassion, a man who inspired others to follow his example, a man who was willing to die rather than submit to the powers of his day – but a man.

But Matthew makes it clear in Sunday’s Gospel that Jesus was far more than just good or special; this man was divine. While genealogies might be constructed to show the lineage of Jesus, there was more to this man that could only be seen with the eyes of faith. He was God in human flesh.

We might say that if any analysis of the DNA of Jesus could have been done, it would have shown a **D**ivine **N**ature **A**bsolutely!

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