

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, December 22, 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.

THE MAIN CHARACTER

In most stories there is usually a main character who stands out. The author has the action revolve around that particular character. For example, in *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens centers his story on Ebenezer Scrooge. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, L. Frank Baum makes Dorothy his main character.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 1:18-24), which describes the events before the birth of Jesus, Matthew is inspired to center his story on Joseph. Joseph is the one who receives an angelic message in a dream telling him what to do about Mary. Joseph is the one, who contrary to Jewish law, accepts a seemingly unfaithful fiancée into his home as his wife. Joseph is the one who inserts Mary's child into the line of King David.

However, if instead we read Luke's accounts of those events, we see that Luke is inspired to focus on Mary. Mary is the one who is visited by an angel. Mary is the one who obediently puts herself at the service of God. Mary is the one who gives flesh to the Messiah. Joseph is in the background.

But if we look more carefully at what Matthew and Luke were inspired to write, we see that both authors really indicate that neither Joseph nor Mary is the main character in the story about the birth of Jesus. Rather God is the main character who moves the story along.

God is the one who sends his angelic messengers. God is the one who instructs his angels what to say. God is the one who gives Joseph and Mary the grace to be open to his will. God is the one who brings about the birth of the Messiah not through human desire or human evolution, but miraculously through the Holy Spirit. God is the one who makes certain that the prophecies of old are fulfilled.

In the story of the birth of the Messiah, God is the main character. God moves things along.

If we look at the story of our own spiritual lives, that is also true. It is God who gives us life. It is God who inserts us into a family of believers or into circumstances that bring us to faith. It is God who speaks to us in the scriptures, in the liturgy, in the events of life, and through the good and holy people that he places in our path. It is God who chooses us and blesses us with the wisdom to respond to his invitation to have a relationship with him.

In these days before Christmas as we recall how God acted to bring about the birth of Jesus, we might also consider how God has acted in our own lives. People of faith realize that in the story of their lives, God is the main character. God is the one who makes things happen.

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Best Wishes for a Joyful Christmas Season!