

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, December 22, 2024

The 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.

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

VISITATIONS

This Christmas Season is not only a season for giving. It is also a season for visiting!

Children away at school come home to visit their families and to see childhood friends.

Adult children visit their parents and siblings.

Boys and girls are taken by Moms and Dads to visit grandparents and great grandparents.

Married couples make it a point to visit their in-laws.

Neighbors often pay each other a holiday visit.

People visit their parishes for Mass. Even those who have drifted away from their faith often visit the Lord at Christmas.

These visits take place for a variety of reasons. We may visit out of love, concern, obligation, tradition, loneliness, or because we were invited.

This Sunday's Gospel (Luke 1:39-45) focuses our attention on a visit, perhaps one of the most remembered visits of all time, namely, Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth.

This visit has been depicted by artists throughout the centuries. It is recalled whenever we pray the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. This visit has given us phrases found in the Hail Mary and even has its own special day: the Feast of the Visitation that is celebrated on May 31.

This visit, just like our own visits during this Christmas Season, took place for a reason.

Mary could have had several motives for making the 90-mile walk to see her cousin Elizabeth.

Mary may have gone to assist the elderly Elizabeth in her final three months of pregnancy and to rejoice with her that she and Zechariah would finally become parents.

Mary may have visited Elizabeth to tell her the amazing news she had received from the angel Gabriel about her being favored to give birth to the "Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:32).

Perhaps Mary visited Elizabeth to learn from her experience what to expect as the child developed in her womb.

Mary may have sought Elizabeth's advice on how she might handle the possible confusion in the mind of Joseph and their neighbors.

Whatever the reason, Mary's visit to Elizabeth was a source of wondrous delight for both of them.

It led Elizabeth to cry, “Blessed are you among women” as she felt the unborn infant in her womb leap for joy. And it caused Mary to give praise to God and exclaim, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my savior” (Luke 1:46).

This time of year, as we make our visits to family and friends, we might remember Mary’s visit to Elizabeth. Like Mary, may we bring joy to those we visit, and by our love and kindness may we remind them of the Holy One whom Mary brought with her on her visit to Elizabeth.

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***Best Wishes for Happy and Holy Christmas Season,
Filled with the Peace and Presence of Christ the Lord.***