

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, December 25, 2016**

## **Christmas Day**

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.

### **MORE THAN SENTIMENTAL**

*It's a Wonderful Life, White Christmas, Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street, A Christmas Carol, How the Grinch Stole Christmas, A Christmas Story, and A Charlie Brown Christmas, have something else in common beyond the fact they all revolve around Christmas.*

They are all sentimental and cherished stories that appear on our television screens again and again during this most wonderful time of the year. They seem to never grow old and we never tire of watching them.

There is another story that also makes its appearance at this time of year, story found in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 2:1-14). It is the story of a husband and his very pregnant wife who are required by law to make a trip to Bethlehem for a government census. There the woman gives birth to a baby boy in a stable, since every room in the town is occupied by visitors who have also come to fulfill the law.

It's a wonderful story about anxious parents, the birth of a baby, singing angels, startled shepherds, the appearance of a shining star, royal visitors from exotic lands, and confusion and concern among those in power.

At this time of year that story is sung about in Christmas carols, dramatized in school and parish pageants, illustrated on Christmas Cards, and depicted in the manger scenes set up in homes and churches.

That story, like those mentioned earlier, tugs at our hearts and emotions and brings to mind past Christmases that we have celebrated. We never really celebrate just one Christmas, we celebrate with memories and emotions of Christmases past.

But we need to take care that the Nativity Story does not just become another story that appears in December, filled with sentiment and emotion, and then disappears until next year – a story that can seem more fable than fact.

It is interesting to consider that half the Gospels, namely John and Mark, have no traditional Nativity Story. Mark starts his Gospel with Jesus as a grown man ready to begin his ministry. John begins his Gospel with a very theological presentation about the Eternal Word of God becoming flesh.

And the first Nativity Scene that we associate with Christmas did not appear until it was introduced by Saint Francis of Assisi in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and only gradually became a fixture of Christmas.

What we celebrate at each Christmas is far more than just a sentimental story that warms our hearts each cold and dark December. It is a proclamation that God is no longer hidden away in

heaven, hidden away in some dimension beyond our understanding. Christmas announces the amazing news that God has jumped into the nitty gritty of human life with all of its messiness and sorrows, ups and downs, and become one of us.

God has taken on flesh and walked among us so that we might hear his words from human lips, see his love and mercy in human acts of kindness and compassion, and so know the path to true happiness by learning from his very human life and death.

Christmas also proclaims that God who came among us that day in Bethlehem has not disappeared from this world. He continues to be born this Christmas Day, and every day. He continues to be a God who is with us, and not apart in the heavens. A God who calls us to know him, and to love him, and to follow him.

The sentiment of Christmas is good, wonderful, and heartwarming, but even more amazing is the fact that “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

Christmas proclaims that we do not have to look up to see God, we only need to look around!

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***Best Wishes for a Joyous Christmas, Filled with God's Presence and Peace!***