

## FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What a delightful opportunity to continue to share Christ's gifts even after the liturgy! Last week's parish picnic was a most welcome event, organized by many competent hands for the enjoyment of one another and for the good of our appetites. In our liturgy this weekend, instead of that generosity we all experienced, we observe some tight-fisted responses within the scriptural passages.

Here we see Moses' encounter with the Lord in the cloud, where the Lord actually gathers up some of the spirit that was on Moses and gifts it upon the 72 elders. However, Joshua tight-handedly resents the unfair absence of two of these elders as if to deny these two absentees this remarkable gift. Our gentle Moses must appeal to Joshua to be tolerant, for the Lord God can "bestow his spirit on them all." In the Second Reading, we find St. James hurling a stinging indictment of the rich who, in their terrible self-centeredness, unjustly exploit the weak. At the letter's end, one cannot help but notice the clear alignment with Jesus, who in His passion never even resisted such abuse.

The Gospel continues this thesis as Jesus' apostles complain (or complained — recall Joshua and the 72 elders) about the man outside their group of selected disciples who took it upon himself to exorcise demons in Jesus' name. Suddenly, what they have thought to be their exclusive right was no longer theirs alone! Mercifully, Jesus is found schooling the Apostles in tolerance, that they should never be a stumbling block to their brothers in faith.

Isn't it possible that we too can become stumbling blocks to others, especially when we are unkind or unjust in our treatment of them; when we humiliate the other purposely and damage their self-image; when we discourage or ignore them as human beings, or when we become judgmental of those who are still struggling to reach a level of spiritual commitment? I implore you to avoid conduct that may lead to such callousness.

We are all witnesses to the chilling developments in this Church today. However, in the wake of these revelations, as we denounce those who have directly or indirectly caused these scandals and harm, let us not be oblivious to the vast company of charitable, moral priests and bishops in our milieu who have been there for us as Christ would. As I am completely in solidarity with prayers for victims and their families and lawful justice for perpetrators of these crimes, still I have every reason to be hopeful for emerging clemency. **"Truly, where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more." (Romans 5: 20)**

— Blessed weekend!