

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

All the priests of the Diocese of Knoxville will be gathering for a week-long retreat at the Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center in North Carolina. Thus I plan to leave following my celebration of Monday's Holy Mass but will be back in time for our Friday morning Mass and Adoration. Keep our priests in your prayers, especially during these trying times in our Church. We shall keep you, too, in our prayers. Today's Liturgy of the Word certainly inspires me as I anticipate this week of prayer and soul searching, to step up with courage, love, and commitment.

Our First Reading is a Messianic prophecy considered by many Old Testament scholars to be the concluding portion of the Prophet Isaiah. This Song of the Suffering Servant relays how the promised Messiah would save mankind by sacrificing himself as the atonement for our sins. In the Second Reading, the writer of the Book of Hebrews utters in wonder at Jesus' profound likeness to us in our weakness juxtaposed against the absence of sin in His being. We are encouraged to approach the holy altar asking for grace and mercy.

In the Gospel, Mark continues with the thesis on suffering as he explains how Jesus accomplishes his mission of salvation by becoming that "Suffering Servant." Thus, we observe how he uses James and John, sons of Zebedee, with particular gentleness, to illustrate how his apostles are all called to greatness through serving. True followers of Jesus are all invited to serve others with sweetness, sometimes verbally and often silently. We recall the humble serving that St. John Paul II undertook during his life, whose Feast the Church celebrates tomorrow, Monday, Oct. 22, on the anniversary of his papal inauguration.

Being a true follower of Jesus becomes then an encounter to "drink the cup of Jesus" by laying down our lives, sometimes in humble sacrificial death like our Master. It can happen in our homes, workplaces, and our faith community where we strive by example to represent Jesus. As I stated last weekend, when we make even the most everyday sacrifices for the welfare of others in the family and in the community, we are serving God. Currently, our precious faith community is in need of more service-leaders: Will you consider becoming a service-leader in our faith community? Contemplate this next weekend, how God may use you to uphold our Christian community now and in the coming year.

— A Joyous Sunday!