

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



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write this reflection during our annual Diocesan priests' retreat in remote Junaluska, North Carolina. Our retreat moderator has been emphasizing the importance of the Eucharist in the life of the Church. I pray with Jesus that the clergy and laity contemplate the overflowing mercy and kindness of a loving, healing, and forgiving God. With the wounds borne within our Church caused by the ongoing sexual scandals of some of the religious hierarchy, we come together for prayer, dialogue, and genuine soul searching.

Our First Reading from the prophet Jeremiah generates great hopefulness and deliverance as the Israelites return from captivity in Babylon. With stirring verse and vision, Jeremiah prefigures the coming of the Messiah as the Israelites hear about a liberating and a loving God. The Gospel echoes these parallel features of a compassionate and merciful God through the deep healing of the blind Bartimaeus. Many New Testament scholars understand Bartimaeus' healing as the fulfillment of Jeremiah's joyful prophecy, this 'coming back' to salvation.

Do we 'cry out' to Jesus, "*Jesus, son of David, have pity on me,*" as we ourselves encounter those moments of spiritual blindness? A clear spiritual vision enables us to ponder the life and death of our Lord as well as the mystery of our life and death; to look at the goodness in others, expressing to them their gifts to us; to participate in the sacraments and cling fearlessly to the Word. Bartimaeus' courage and faith overcame the rebukes of the crowd, modeling a new kind of fidelity.

As Christians, let us seek Jesus with blind faith in his goodness and mercy. This can be a very interior plea of desperation; sometimes our fears, anger, and habitual sins may prevent us from approaching God in prayer. Perhaps we even forget this!

*"Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you."*

*Jesus replied to Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?"*

Let us examine and share with Him all our heart's intentions and needs, not only once, but multiple times throughout the course of time.

"Jesus, help me to simplify my life by learning what you want me to be – and becoming that person." *St. Thérèse of Lisieux*

— Joyous Sunday!