

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I begin by expressing very profound appreciation to our parish community who turned out in large numbers for last Sunday's fifth ecumenical service. Our guests were filled with praises for all the culinary efforts provided by our Women's group and the Hispanic community. The music was beautiful, thanks to our choir. The event's unity was evident.

The Gospel reading this Sunday is another of my favorites since there were many parallel reactions from folks in my home parish when I was newly ordained! [This took place in my first parish in Ayangba with Ejule, my native home as a station Church]. However, like the early Christians, I was still able to keep my faith and conviction, despite the initial reaction from my own people who felt they knew me too well.

Our First Reading is a dialogue between God and Jeremiah as he appointed him a 'prophet to the nations' equipping him to face opposition and rejection amongst an unfaithful covenant people. In this passage, many Old Testament scholars allude to Jeremiah as a 'type' of Jesus. It is quite hopeful to read how the Lord pledges total deliverance for Jeremiah. Our Second Reading, is literarily a 'hymn to love' from beginning to end with Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians in its most exalted form. St. Paul admonishes them not to lose footing with this supreme Christian virtue, love.

Today's Holy Gospel according to Luke continues to portray Jesus' *inaugural address* in the synagogue at Nazareth. As noted above, we see subsequent reactions from those who claimed to know him so well. Although his proposal was based on the tradition of the time, we see how Jesus, much like Jeremiah and Paul, contended with skepticism and criticism from the opposition all for a greater good; conversion of his critics. Clearly, the wrath that the people felt towards Jesus in the synagogue was ironic; he becomes marginalized. They wanted Jesus to perform a miracle for them; yes he did, by walking away unharmed as they wanted to throw him off the brow of the hill. Our Lord's life was one of brave self-denial, quiet generosity sent to bear witness to the truth, but he does not accept vengeance.

In our own lives we may encounter rejection or have been guilty of ignoring and rejecting others. The readings this weekend serve both as warning and encouragement, that we, in our private actions, must stop pushing Jesus and his doctrine aside. We saw this happen in his own hometown, and it could happen in ours too. Are there times when we fail to acknowledge him in others, instead rebuking or ignoring in a self-seeking manner? Even for the many times we have been rejected or violated as God's agents of healing and saving grace, may we implore the help of Jesus to give us strength, courage and faith to surmount those moments and trust in the loving mercy of our God.

Joyous Sunday!