

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In anticipation of our upcoming Parish Communal Penance Service this Wednesday at 7pm, I want all of you to realize that this is a time to experience the love of the Father in a very special way, as we come to confess our sins. How deep an experience it is to open oneself to the transforming power of God, to abandon the old person and become the new person!

Today's liturgical readings are again remarkable as we are counseled against condemning others, seeing how our Lord tenderly calls us to conversion. This week we look forward to the *new* exodus that God promises through

the Prophet Isaiah, far more wonderful than the first one. This reading gives a glimpse into the lavish forgiveness God brings to his people in Christ. In the second reading, Paul presents himself as a sinner who has unintentionally experienced the extraordinary mercy of God. That 'old person become the new person' is what enabled St. Paul to forge ahead, a worthy model for us this week!

Today's Gospel continues to demonstrate the loving mercy of God as Jesus forgives the sin of the woman caught committing adultery. Jesus reveals the inexhaustible mercy and compassion of God to the sinner. In this Gospel, Jesus asks us to look inward in place of "being the first to throw a stone at her." Although the hypocritical accusers pretend to entrust the judgement to him, it is actually Jesus himself whom they wish to accuse and judge the woman. How curious, that there are such varied ways of being brought to Jesus! The woman caught in adultery is chastened. So too are the scribes and Pharisees as they slowly depart, one by one. We must however be clear that Jesus was not condoning adultery, but only demonstrating the love of the Father to the sinner, with great gentleness and mercy.

The Church is not a foundation for condemnation, but for forgiving and reconciling people to God. Does this sound too simple? This is one of Jesus' main missions which the Body of Christ furnishes. "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Let us therefore not forget to follow the radical examples of St. Paul in the Second Reading (Phil. 3:8-14), who regarded everything as lost compared to friendship with God. Like him, let us then forget the past and run toward the goal God has called us for in Christ Jesus by pardoning our own erring brothers and sisters.

Blessed Lenten Season!