

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This weekend, our Church on earth is instructed to always have hope in God and in oneself, since He plans to make all things new again in the Eternal Jerusalem. This is only going to be possible in a world where you and I learn to value each other as God values us.

While our Liturgy continues to reveal the activities and arrangements of the early Christian communities, a new facet of love is revealed within their members, *agape*. We understand *agape* as a sacrificial action that one wills towards another, having little to do with feelings or natural affection. We see this working through Paul and Barnabas (recalling our first reading last Sunday), this selfless love which seeks to benefit one another, as they go about form-

ing the Church throughout the Mediterranean. In the second reading from Revelation, John gives us a vision of that Eternal Jerusalem as he unfolds God's presence, preparing us with a transformative prophecy.

In our Gospel passage we receive Jesus' blazingly new commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13: 35). What a radical departure, that Jesus has added this strong new element to the Old Testament command of love, by teaching us this new test of discipleship, to love one another in the same way that he has loved us; modeling that sacrificial, unconditional, *agápe* love. Hence, the renewal of Christian life means a deep change of vision and a reordering of priorities in our life. This comes with prayer, faith and grace from the Holy Spirit! According to Jesus' teaching on love, we regain our true worth as Christians. In it we learn to appreciate and cherish each other without a motive, except for following our Lord's example.

If we were to only look at the Old Testament wherein the Jews are encouraged to 'love your neighbor', keep in mind that this was directed only within the confines of one's 'inner family circle.' Wondrously, Jesus moves beyond these constraints, instructing his disciples that this new love is to be qualitatively different. Willing the genuine good of someone, acting as a bridge between that person and God, we respond to our daily encounters with gentleness and compassion; behaving with kindness and full respect, comforting and protecting even those who seem to have ill will towards us; serving others in every possible way no matter how small, seeing the FACE OF JESUS in them; forgiving rather than condemning, by sacrificially sharing our time, talents and blessings with them.

"What does love look like? It has the hands to help others, the feet to hasten to the poor and needy, the eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like." St. Augustine of Hippo

A blessed Sunday!