

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Grace and Peace!

As we continue our celebration of the Risen Lord, this Sixth Sunday of Easter liturgy bathes us in the effects of God's abiding presence. We experience this both in His Church and His indwelling within each one of us. With Jesus' clear-cut reassurance, nothing can separate us from His love.

The first reading marks a turning point for the early Church, as the early disciples break away from the historical Mosaic rules. Although they still maintain their roots in the rich theology and traditions of the Jews, now we see the vital guidance of the Holy Spirit in providing a major doctrinal decision concerning the Gentiles' entry into Christianity. We feel this presence today as the disciples did in the first century. In our Second Reading, John, in continues his vision of the Church as the heavenly Jerusa-

lem, that holy city illuminated in light through the 'glory of God'; here the victorious Jesus resides. This replaces the Old Testament account of God whose dwelling was exclusively in the *Holy of Holies* within the physical Temple in Jerusalem.

Our Gospel, in preparation for Pentecost reminds Christians that the Holy Spirit, abiding within us, is our Teacher and the Source of all peace. In St. John's account, Jesus declares, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you." He doesn't just *wish* them peace. He *gives* it to them. If they live, guided by his Spirit, remembering and keeping his words, they will know that exceptional peace that comes not by human effort, but by God's Grace.

As a spiritual director for seminarians back in my country and today as I assist many Christian faithful as they confront vital life decisions, I have grown to realize the need to rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If a particular decision is made without calling upon this significant intervention, using only human thinking, and should it be wrongly made, a possible upshot can be serious interference with our earthly welfare, but more importantly jeopardize our eternal salvation. That is why ongoing daily prayers and reflections are so vital in framing our day with the blessings of the Holy Spirit.

During those moments in our lives as we go through challenges, may we be assured that we are never abandoned. This is especially true in a world where nearly 25% of all adults live alone, and families often live as virtual strangers. This is because technology is taking over interpersonal relationships, it is of enormous comfort that Jesus is always present to us. He shares with us His peace and replaces the burden of our guilt with the freedom of forgiveness. Therefore, all of us must hold to this truth that Jesus loves us and comes to us personally, in the sacraments and especially at every Eucharistic celebration. At the closing of each Mass with the priests' words "Go forth, the Mass is ended," Jesus goes forth *with* us because of his great love for us.

Peaceful Sunday!