

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I extend my thanks to all of you for keeping me in your daily prayers. It was a fine vacation at home with family, friends, and former parishioners, and I will share some of those events at a later time. Today permit me to welcome the Most Rev. Richard Stika and guests on the occasion of my installation as new Pastor of St. Joseph the Worker, Madisonville, Tenn.

Our liturgy this weekend contributes to our understanding of what constitutes true religion. The thread that runs throughout our readings revolves around law and how it interfaces with true faith — not merely a scrupulous, external observance of rules derived from human tradition, but that loving and obedient relationship with a God who is in love with his creatures and invites them into a relationship with him.

Our First Reading shines upon Moses in this final supplication to his people prior to their crossing over the Jordan. He reminds the people about how critical it is to maintain strict observance to the law, keeping God's commandments and by being a light to all nations. In the second reading, James defines true religion as keeping the word of God and doing His will, in helping anyone in need. In this 'new law,' James inspires Christians to become doers of the word, not merely hearers.

We now resume the next series of Gospel readings from Mark until the end of the liturgical year. Now in today's Gospel, Jesus challenges the hypocritical mindset of the Pharisees who love to observe only the *externals* of the law without taking the true meaning of the law into consideration. We observe this disconnect when we consider that many of the laws, especially those surrounding purity, came about as *comments* on the Law, and are subject to human interpretation, thus not equal to the Word of God. The twelve defects Jesus notes that makes one impure warrant our interior examination.

We all must strive to learn and keep the spirit of the Sacred Scriptures and the teachings of the Church, not only as an "obligation" [law], but as an invitation to participate in a great banquet with the Body of Christ. What a deep well we are graced with! For we gather to offer our lives to God, to ask His pardon for sins, to thank Him for His blessings, and to receive Divine life and strength from Him in Holy Communion. We can also strive for this at home in our daily family prayers, not as an "obligation" or external observance, but as the occasion to thank God for his blessings on our families and loved ones.

— Joyful Sunday!