

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace from Africa!

This past Thursday, I celebrated the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Blessed Mother at the orphanage and will bring you some photos of the day. Last Sunday's Mass here lasted one hundred and sixty-five minutes and culturally a bit different from St. Joseph the Worker. Today's Liturgy of the Word emboldens us to fearlessly live out our religious convictions and principles as Jeremiah, Paul and Jesus did, even if doing so should result in our martyrdom. Isn't that the kind of courage that turns society upside down? If no one is ever offended by the quality of our commitment to Christ, then perhaps we are practicing "inoffensive Christianity."

In our First Reading, the prophet Jeremiah experiences the consequences of the burning word of God within him. Jeremiah's preaching divided the city and incited such opposition that people sought his death. Sticking to his prophetic conviction, he told the king to surrender to the mighty army of the Babylonian empire to save Israel. The result was that Jeremiah was thrown into a deep, muddy cistern to die for this so-called "treason." Standing within this prophetic tradition, St. Paul challenges the Judeo-Christians to stand firm in their faith in Jesus, ignoring the ostracism imposed on them by their earlier Jewish community.

Our Gospel reading aligns, as we see our Lord preaching the word of God which continues to divide families, a word which, he knew, would lead ultimately to his death. The fire Jesus brings is the purifying fire of love and hope. The disruption, division, and revolution, which Jesus and his true followers cause in society by the fire of sacrificial love and the fire of justice, are necessary to re-set what's fractured, put right what's dislocated and cleanse what's infected. In pursuing his mission, Jesus brings division because some follow him, and others oppose him. We each must decide to follow him or not, to share his "baptism" or not. This choice can result in division, even within families.

Our liturgy this weekend does encourage us to appreciate the contemporary prophets in the Church of our day. The Vatican's chief liturgist, Cardinal Robert Sarah, is one of those people not afraid to direct the world towards the celebration of our very faith, particularly throughout the difficult crises of our Church. *'The day we no longer burn with love for our faith, the world will be cold, deprived of its most precious good. It is our task to defend and announce the faith!'*

Finally, remembering our baptisms, let us rekindle the fire in our hearts from that day when we received the light of Christ and we and sponsors were instructed to keep that torch burning brightly until the return of Christ Jesus. In addition, the Holy Spirit was sent into our hearts at Confirmation also to help set us on fire. As Christians on fire, our prayer is to inflame people to care, to serve, and to bless one another with all the gifts of Faith. May we then be ready to carry our torchlights when the priest says: "The Mass is ended go forth"

A PEACEFUL AND JOYOUS SUNDAY!