

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Grace and Peace from Africa!

In answer to your generous prayers, this time spent at my birth home has been safe and constructive, providing me time with family, friends, and for slowing down. The opportunity to celebrate the Mass at our orphanage on the Holy Day of Assumption was both beautiful as well as important. I have been able to evaluate the dynamics of the facility with several visits and will have some photos upon my return. Another primary journey this weekend is in our liturgy as our Lord continues onto Jerusalem. Many of us ponder and question our future salvation, and today our Lord urges us not to delay.

In our First Reading, Isaiah's prophecy speaks to those exiles returning to Jerusalem after forty-seven years in captivity, enlightening them with a fresh vision. He predicts how every nation of the world would come streaming toward Jerusalem, acknowledging, praising the God of Israel with news of our salvation. In his letter to the Hebrews, the writer reminds the early Christian followers how our chastening from the Father is a necessary price towards future graces. *Thus, "the narrow gate" of Jesus means accepting pain and suffering as the loving discipline from God to His children.*

Today's Gospel continues the thesis of salvation for everyone, as we hear once again about entering through the *narrow gate*. We recognize how our Lord does everything to please His Father. Jesus wants us to ask the question: *"Am I prepared to be saved, choosing to follow the path of being reconciled with God daily?"* You may have heard among our non-Catholic brethren that their teaching on salvation is 'once saved, always save,' despite one's future sins and even apostasy! Holy Mother Church understands that salvation is an ongoing fact, that we are all sinners and that frequent opportunities for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation restores our path with Jesus, aligning us along that narrow way. Eternal salvation must be prayed for, with hard work on our part, and God's Grace to see us through. We cannot afford to put off conversion of heart indefinitely but pray for guidance through the Holy Spirit in our Scripture reading, ongoing prayers, and in reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

Pope Benedict XVI has said: "The passage to eternal life is open to all, but it is 'narrow' because it is demanding. It requires commitment, self-denial, and the mortification of one's selfishness" (*Angelus, Aug. 26, 2007*).

— Joyful Sunday!