

# FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!



This weekend's reflection is on Jesus, our supreme shepherd, who redeems and provides for His flock. Providentially this liturgy falls on the 29th anniversary of my Priestly Ordination, a sacred treasure from God. Like the prophets of old, this call *to serve* has given me many opportunities to rely on the strength of God in becoming your shepherd. I thank all of you for your prayers and good wishes this weekend. With the benefit of these readings, I am determined to challenge my stewardship as a priest these past 29 years; essentially this may apply to all leaders and parents given the task to serve and blaze a trail for their children and others, both spiritual and temporal.

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our first reading, the prophet Jeremiah thunders against Israel's less leaders; the king, various priests, and certain court prophets, for being merciless to the poor. Jeremiah also foretells the rise of a good, *new* shepherd from the Davidic dynasty. Then he consoles the Israelites enslaved in Babylon, assuring them that God will lead them back to their original pasture in Israel. The second reading continues the same model by introducing Jesus as the shepherd of both the Jews and the Gentiles and explains how Jesus, the good shepherd, reconciles all of us with His Father by offering himself on the cross, providing grace to all through one Spirit.

Our Gospel writer Mark presents Jesus as that realization from Jeremiah, the Good Shepherd completing God's promise. Here we see Jesus attending to his travel-weary apostles just returning from their first preaching mission; He invites them to rest in a quiet place while at the same time expresses his concern for the neighboring people who, '*like sheep without a shepherd,*' hurry to meet him in that *deserted place*. We see first the importance of resting in the Lord, quietly allowing Jesus to instruct and encourage us.

At the same time, I also experience the priestly commission of being available to my flock, through our Lord, Jesus. This Christian life is a continual circle from the presence of God to the presence of people and back again. Quiet prayer is therefore essential; it allows us the opportunity to speak with God and to hear what he wills for us. You've heard me champion this encounter with God both in the Eucharist and in praying with our daily scripture. We are thus energized to share in the Shepherd's preaching and healing ministry by praying to Him as a community of one faith, as well as individually and in the family context.

St. Peter Julian Eymard recommends that one should rest with Jesus after receiving His Body and Blood. "The best thing to do is stay in silence for a while to regain our strength and to let Jesus talk to us in the silence of our hearts." This period of summer may be useful in cultivating our inner spirits as we chart our daily course, allowing for the inner graces that come from quiet faith.

Blessed Sunday!