

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!

I welcome all of you to the First Sunday of Advent, Year B. This year's Advent season is certainly going to be like no other, thanks to the Covid19 pandemic. Advent is an ancient time of longing for the twofold coming of Christ, and our culture's lockdowns have no sway over how we elect to embrace such events! For me, it continues to remind me of childhood memories focused on receiving gifts, however, today I know better. This is so because each of the four Sundays' liturgies prepares our hearts to deepening conversion, meditating upon the Second Coming of Our Lord. We are living through a time in our country where the soul of America is under trial. However, we are called to surrender ourselves to our Lord, regardless of obstacles, not waiting for the last hour.

In the first reading from Isaiah, a prayer of lament over the transgressions of Israel, the prophet begs God not to be angry forever for its peoples' rebellious actions. The backstory of St. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians reflects upon divisions in the community, one noted for early paganism and infighting. Bolstering the Christian community, St. Paul reminds the early Christians of their favored standing in relationship to Jesus, attempting to establish order and harmony. Are we not surprised that there is great relevance to the Church today?

Continuing the above thesis, St. Mark's introductory warnings, sometimes known as "The Little Apocalypse," is not meant to paralyze one with fear or panic! Rather we can look upon it as entering a time of change, not returning to how things were, but hoping in the coming presence of the Son of Man. This reading relays Jesus' last discourse to the apostles before his Passion, and one may see it is a kind of farewell. To wit in this passage of Mark, we receive a new cue from our Lord to watch and be alert! Remaining in a state of Grace through faithful Communion of our Lord, regular Confession, and confidently linking our Friday fast to a greater prayer for our Church. During this period of expectation, we all need to put joy on our doorsteps no matter the challenges of our times. As we freely offer our daily work to God, faith, hope, and love remain key to receiving the many gifts awaiting us in this season of Advent.

'The Lord is near'. This is the reason for our joy. —**POPE BENEDICT XVI**, December 14th, 2008.

Happy Advent Sunday and Happy Thanksgiving Weekend!