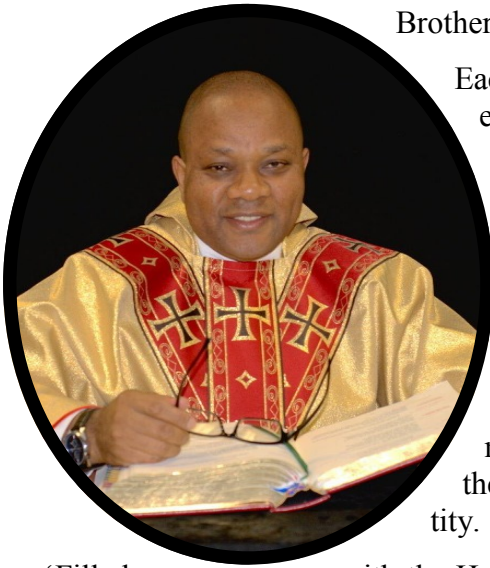


FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!

Each fourth Sunday of Eastertide, the universal Church devotedly observes *The Good Shepherd Sunday* and the *World Day of Prayer for Vocations*. Curiously, I am reminded of a long past vocations' rally I once attended; here were young priests and Religious assembled to relate the promising qualities of their vocations. Somehow, I was not inspired that day. What eventually came through for me has been the call to serve others with all my life, hence the strong magnetism for our Lord, Jesus, the preeminent Good Shepherd. Those early Christians especially saw Jesus as fulfillment of their Jewish dream of a good shepherd (remember the young king David?), which had been integral to their identity.

'Filled with the Holy Spirit', and directing himself to the Jewish assembly, Peter proclaims the only true healing and salvation through *Jesus Christ the Nazarene*. Can you imagine hearing Peter condemn the people over their colossal resistance to the Truth?! In the first Letter of Saint John, as 'children of God', St. John tells us that we not only become the family of God, but that we will someday be like him!

In the Gospel response to the Pharisees' challenging Jesus' Messianic standing, Jesus mildly responds, "I am the good shepherd." Jesus assures them he knows his sheep and loves them so much that he is ready to die for them. This offers us both comfort and challenge: comfort in that Jesus the Good Shepherd knows each of us, provides for and loves us. The task for us is to grow more deeply in our Lord and become for Him *Good sheep* in our parish and *Good shepherds* to those entrusted in our care.

What are the duties of a good shepherd? They provide for their sheep, feed them, protect them from wild predators, tend to them and above all, love their sheep. As our shepherds, we must consider not only our Pope, Bishops and Priests, but also everyone entrusted with the care of others. Hence parents, teachers, medical practitioners, government officials, and politicians all model the shepherd. It is so critical for us in this role to maintain standards that require great dedication, due diligence, commitment, sacrifice, and vigilance at all times.

We are never out of date as we pray for vocations to the holy priesthood and the consecrated life. We pray that the Good Lord sends good pastors after his own heart so that we may have more holy and spirit-filled shepherds to lead, feed, and protect the Catholic community. Amen. For our youth, recall how Pope Saint John Paul II prayed to open the minds and hearts of those young people discerning truth in their lives. 'Arouse in those whom you call the courage of love's answer': "Here I am, send me!"

Joyous Sunday!