

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!



As we gather to celebrate the Holy Eucharist today, we Americans observe the Independence of the greatest nation on earth to which all of us are proud to belong. We petition God to preserve our country and rid it of its evils, while He continues to bless our nation. Being at Mass today is the holiest way to convey our thanksgiving. Our readings this weekend bring to light Jesus' role as Prophet of all prophets. The liturgy of the Word challenges us to confront scorn and condemnation with courage, particularly when it comes from our own flesh and blood.

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God's prophet, Ezekiel will have to face rejection and persecution. In the Second Reading, St. Paul shares the same warning, referring to the thorn in his own flesh – that not only the prophets but also the apostles and missionaries will have to encounter hardships and rejection in *their* preaching mission. Along with St. Paul, I sometimes feel my own "thorn," my own complex, inferior function: the potential for neurotic behaviour. Call it what you will, each of us has one! If I really want to be a disciple, I must concede to this weakness which focuses my attention on true strength, the power of the Lord.

Our Gospel reading presents the unforgettable mockery of Jesus by many in Nazareth who reject him as a prophet, claiming too much familiarity with Him and His family. He left Nazareth as a carpenter; he returns as a teacher and healer. The people only know Him as a carpenter with no schooling in the Mosaic Law; therefore, He could *not* be the promised Davidic Messiah. Pride and envy darkened their intellects, preventing them from seeing the truth. Thus, Jesus did not perform any miracles in Nazareth but chided them for their lack of faith. Our Lord does not impose himself on those whose faith is missing.

Consequently, today's Scriptures beg a necessary question: Are there no times when our peers, families, or childhood companions fail to *hear* us, refusing to accept our words of grace, love, and encouragement? Regrettably, they are unable to see us as God's appointed instruments, agents of God's healing and saving grace. But we must face such rejection with prophetic courage we receive at Baptism. As prophets our task is to speak the truth and oppose the evils in our society without condoning or encouraging sinful behavior even in our dear ones. Let us therefore acknowledge, appreciate, pray for and encourage those prophets today who stand for truth and justice in our society with the wisdom of God in their heads. Amen!

God Bless America and a Joyous Sunday!