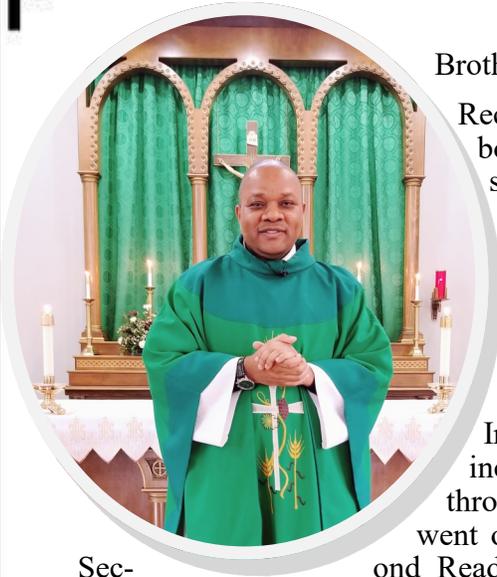


FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!

Recently when some strangers issued threats over our prolife billboard out on the highway, for me it was not intimidating but just served to intensify a fire that already existed! Although God had lit a fire in the prophet Jeremiah from an early age, his subsequent suffering did not stop him from proclaiming the Word, nor did Jesus, Our Lord become intimidated during His Passion. In place of being discouraged, they were *fired up* with God's plans for their lives and humanity. Accordingly, this weekend's readings uphold living out our religious convictions courageously.

In our First Reading, Jeremiah's preaching divided the city and incited such opposition that people sought his death; in fact, he was thrown into a mud-filled cistern allegedly to perish. He eventually went on to break the stony hearts of his people to repentance. In the Second Reading, the writer to the Hebrews counsels Christians to remain steadfast and firm in their faith in Jesus Christ. To reach Him, it appears probable that we will encounter struggles, suffering, and death like Jesus did.

In today's Gospel, our Lord Jesus continues the same thesis. He reminds the crowd that those who commit to him will be impacted in the way they relate to friends and family members. If we want to follow Jesus, we have to do some things that are very different from former traditions. This fire that Jesus speaks about is not destructive, but a purifying fire of love and hope that brings the universal reign of the kingdom of God on Earth. There may be disruption, division, and revolution such that Jesus and his followers may cause in society, but through the sacrificial fire of love and of justice, we learn to prioritize our relationship with Jesus as the primary focus of our lives.

Do you recall at baptism what the priest says? "Receive the light of Christ"? So as Catholics, this fire started in our hearts, through the Holy Spirit when we received the light of Christ and were instructed to keep that torch burning brightly until the return of Christ. That fire has the intensity to burn away evil and selfish desires. So as Christians on fire, and with Our Lady's care, we can inflame people to serve, and to bless one another with all the gifts of Faith. If this fire of love is properly tended and desired, it brings us communion rather than division. Let us therefore pray for the revitalizing Grace from our baptism, to remain committed to God and to one another.

"Come, O Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of thy faithful and kindle in them the Fire of thy Love"

Joyous Sunday!