

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!



Last Sunday we all celebrated the Day of Independence for our nation. Lest we forget the greatness of this event, this day assures us of our rights to equality alongside the pursuit of happiness, which as Christians, we pray for in the life to come. Last Sunday's Liturgy of the Word introduced us to the challenges that are faced by prophets, especially when called to prophesy to their own native people. This Sunday's liturgy continues the theme of God's call to prophesy; at the same time, it reminds us that salvation comes as a result of God's generosity, not according to our own merits. He adopts us as His children and calls us to preach the Good News by bearing witness to the love, mercy and salvation as revealed through Jesus.

Our first reading prepares us that our own Christian witnessing mission, preaching the 'Good News' will be spurned at times. This indeed happens to the Prophet Amos, given that he was told to go elsewhere to prophesy! In his day, a 'professional' guild of self-appointed "prophets" gave prophecy a bad name, so Amos essentially rejects being labeled a *prophet*. By the grace of God, Amos overcomes that stigma and defends his prophetic role with courage, clarifying that it was purely God's choice that he be elevated from shepherd and tree-dresser. Our Second Reading, a letter written from Rome to St. Paul's converts, is rich with the graces, glories and to honors bestowed on us by our inheritance.

In our Gospel, Mark recounts the story of Jesus' commissioning of the twelve apostles to their vocation, '*giving them authority over unclean spirits,*' and curing the sick. Just as God sent the prophet Amos to preach repentance to ancient Israel, and St. Paul to preach the Good News of salvation to the Gentiles, so Jesus sends forth his followers to proclaim the Good News of God's Kingdom and to bring healing to those who need it most.

Consequently, as baptized, according to the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, we have a two-fold mission: a) to be witnessing disciples called to follow Jesus, imitate, reflect, and radiate him. b) and as evangelizing apostles, sharing with others our experience of God and His Son, Jesus. Endeavoring to imitate Jesus' profound pattern of mildness, humility, chasteness, patience and charity are the tools we bring to our witnessing. By building on these graces, we can pray to model our Lord in works of mercy throughout the course of our daily mission, doing all through His Will.

Blessed Sunday!