

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and Peace!

On this Fourth Sunday of Lent, Holy Mother Church gives us a ‘reprise’ reinvigorating us with a boost of joy! This *Laetare Sunday* marks the middle of Lent and provides restrained rejoicing mixed with a certain amount of sadness in anticipation of the Death and Resurrection of Our Lord. Our Sunday of Joy is further heightened with the visit of His Excellency, Bishop Richard Stika who celebrates the 14th anniversary of his Episcopal Ordination and his installation as the Bishop of Knoxville Diocese today.

In our First Reading from the Book of Samuel, we observe the remarkable anointing of David, (the most humble of Jesse’s sons) as second king of Israel. This rich passage brings us up short as we confront how deluded we humans are when we seek our

own counsel, forgetting that our help is in the Lord. In the Second Reading we observe the darkn-light motif with St. Paul as he reminds Christians in Ephesus to most specifically “learn what is pleasing to the Lord,” to avoid any works of darkness and stay in the light of Christ.

In today’s Gospel reading, we see Jesus as he leaves the Temple in the company of His disciples. He comes upon a beggar -- a man who has been blind from birth. Jesus says to His disciples, "He was born blind so that the works of God may be displayed in him... I must carry out the work of the one who sent me" (Jn. 9:3-4). Is it possible that the blind man stands for all of us, made as a new creation by Christ’s saving power? In an action that recalls the creation story from Genesis when God forms man out of clay, Jesus spits on the ground, makes mud with the saliva, and with resolve, spreads the mud on the man's eyes restoring him with the gift of sight.

Jesus thus teaches us the necessity of opening the eyes of the mind by faith; He cautions those who pretend to see the truth. But for those who acknowledge their blindness, the Lord promises clear vision. The most unlikely person in this reading, the blind man, receives the light of faith in Jesus, while the clerically-oriented, law-educated Pharisees remain spiritually blind and obstinate to the presence of the Messiah. We pray that our Lenten prayers and sacrifices may serve to heal our spiritual blindness. Thus, step by step, our journey from darkness into light is in total alignment with our Lord.

As we progress through this Lenten season, may we plead to Jesus to remove our *spiritual cataracts* so that we can have the vision to eradicate the blind spots in our lives today, especially our relationship with materialism, the culture of death and violence, discrimination of every form, blindness and insensitivity to the needs of the poor, injustice and pains around the world, especially within our Catholic culture. May we pray; “God our Father, help us see Christ more clearly, love Him more dearly and follow Him more nearly.” (Scottish Biblical scholar, William Barclay). Amen.

Joyous Sunday and Happy Episcopal Anniversary to Bishop Stika!

Ad multos annos!