

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Grace and peace!



On this Second Sunday of Advent, we light our candle of Faith. This liturgical light opens us to the connections between the Ineffable Greatness and the Indwelling of God's Love in our lives through the Incarnation. Today's readings expose us to the reality of who we are *beyond* the shadows of our lesser selves; they point us in the direction to the larger pattern of the story of an event long ago yet so present and relevant to our daily discernment of God's love.

In our First Reading Isaiah prophesizes an idyllic return to harmony amongst the *animals*, perchance the Second Coming: "Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." Does this not remind us of the

beautiful prophecy we heard last Sunday concerning a return to harmony among humans. "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks;" "One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again" (Isa 2:4).

In the Gospel reading, Matthew draws us closer to the fire of John the Baptist who is appalled at how the Pharisees and Sadducees cheapen and water down the powerful grace of God. He admonishes them towards repentance and how they should conduct themselves in anticipation of the inward conversion that would occur when *'the one who is coming after me'* arrives. If John the Baptist were here today, he would say to us in his passionate voice "Be on fire for Christ!" John the Baptist would certainly not endorse the "business twist" of what advent has been forced into. {It is sadly ignored}. In the same way, as we pray through these Advent liturgies, let us keep the words of John the Baptist in mind, "Prepare the Way of the Lord."

How do we do this? As Holy Advent unfolds and Christmas approaches, we are challenged to allow the chaff of our sins and selfishness to be burned away while opening our hearts to the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. We must pray for faith to believe; like so many circumstances in our life, events may appear logically implausible, but we need to grasp the truth-that God supersedes human logic! And pray for the humility of John the Baptist who desired only to point to Christ. In the oft-repeated words of Pope Alexander: "What does it profit me if Jesus is reborn in thousands of cribs all over the world and not reborn in my heart?"

This year, I encourage all of you to prepare for the grace of Christmas by making a good Confession. Opportunities are as follows: 1) Come to our weekly Saturday Confessional from 3-to 3:45 pm: 2) Scheduled appointments with me by calling the office and 3) Some Churches in the Diocese will be holding communal Penance Services throughout this month, it might be a good idea to attend any of these confessions. This way we are ready to receive the infant Jesus.

Blessed Advent Sunday!