

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!



Last Sunday, St. John related Jesus' first public miracle at Cana. In St. Luke's Gospel reading today, we behold another public revelation of our Lord, this time at His hometown in Nazareth. While called upon to read and comment on the Torah portion, Jesus announces His mission as the promised Messiah, His Kingdom of God on Earth. Today He calls us to listen closely to the Word, accept it into our hearts, and function as His ambassadors for holiness. This might be a day to reflect more, talk less and preach with our actions.

In our First Reading, an early Israeli priest, Ezra, assembles a great number of people in efforts to restore the worship of the God of Israel and to create a purified Jewish community.

This all follows on the heels of the rebuilding of the second Temple in Jerusalem and becomes a "covenant renewal" ceremony. In the Second Reading, St. Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians and us today; "Together we are Christ's Body, but each of us is a different part of it." This suggests how important it is that as members of the Body of Christ, we each have a share, as his instruments, in bringing the freeing and saving mission of Christ to our world. None of us are insignificant since Christ needs every part, every person, to fulfill his or her role in life.

In the Gospel, as if an echo from Ezra, St. Luke recounts our Lord's vocational entry into public ministry as he revisits his former Synagogue in Nazareth. Recalling the Baptism in the Jordan, today that same Spirit was leading him to proclaim a message and a way of life to teach the Word of God. Using Isaiah's prophetic terms, Jesus describes his own mission "to bring Good News to the poor." Standing before the people, Jesus declares that he is the One sent "to bring liberation to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed."

You may recall a favorite Latin phrase of mine, '*nemo dat quod non habet*' (you cannot give what you do not have). Christians therefore need to accept the liberation from sin and subsequent mercy from God. Contemplate this: if we are not part of Christ's body, we cannot share it with others. Each time we partake in the Holy Eucharist, we become grafted onto Christ, and in some mysterious fashion, part of His Body. Hence the grace of illumination drives out our enslavement to sin. From this holy encounter, may our hearts burn with the same zeal that inspired Jesus so that we may be challenged to a "fresh beginning."

Happy Sunday!