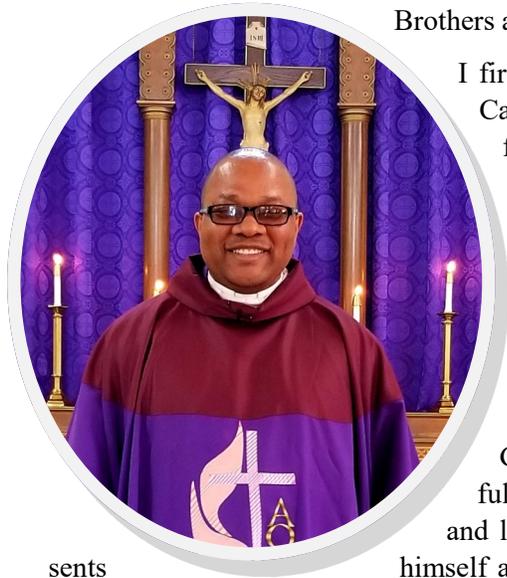


FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and Peace!

I first want to thank all of you who made the Confirmation of our Candidates possible last Sunday. Congratulations to the newly Confirmed as well as their families! Thank you, Jan Dye of DRE, our teachers, particularly Keith Feltz who taught the 2022 Confirmation Class, and further appreciation to our many volunteers. The readings this Sunday display a seamless thread from the loving and merciful God. Placing ourselves close to His mercy, we are counseled against condemning others, seeing how our Lord tenderly calls us to forgiveness.

In the First Reading, we look forward to the *new* exodus that God promises through the Prophet Isaiah. We see this all-powerful God who can do anything, including opening “a way in the sea and leading a powerful army.” In the Second Reading, St. Paul pre-

sents himself as a sinner who has experienced the mercy of God, having been completely transformed by his faith in Christ Jesus. The question that arose whether or not Gentile converts to Christianity must initially become full and legal Jews prompted the Council of Jerusalem.

Today’s Gospel continues to demonstrate the loving mercy of God as Jesus forgives the sin of the woman caught in adultery. Sin could be pleasurable, however, sometimes it has diverse long-term and devastating consequences. In some cases, it takes a terrible toll on ones’ life, family, finances and even spiritual well-being, however, Our Lord extends the mercy of God to the woman that was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Jesus thus, creates a teaching moment for all involved, revealing the inexhaustible mercy and compassion to the sinner. In this Gospel, Jesus asks us to look inward in place of “being the first to throw a stone at her.” Although the hypocritical accusers pretend to entrust the judgement to him, it is actually Jesus himself whom they wish to accuse and judge; they have little genuine interest in the woman or in her fate. There are challenges with both parties here, and the act of our Lord ‘writing in the dust’ clearly indicates how all are in need of re-creation, [from dust we were made]. Lest one be misguided that the adultery here is condoned, the greater demonstration here is the love of the Father to the sinner.

The Church is not a foundation for condemnation, but for forgiving and reconciling people to God. Does this sound too simple? Probably yes! This is indeed one of Jesus’ main missions loving the sinner, but detesting the sin. We are all sinners, that was why Our Lord said, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Once we are able to acknowledge our sins, to ask God’s forgiveness every day, we can extend the same pardon to our straying brothers and sisters in our community.

Let us therefore not forget to follow the examples of St. Paul in the Second Reading (Phil. 3:8-14) who regarded everything as lost compared to friendship with God. Like him, let us then forget the past and run toward the goal God has called us for in Christ Jesus.

Blessed Lenten Season!