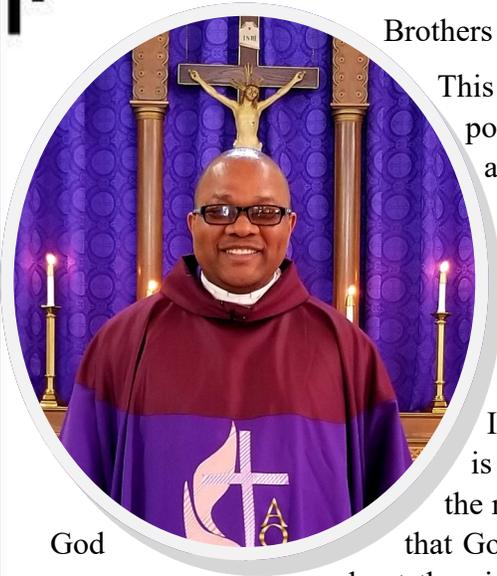


FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!

This Tuesday, (Dec. 7) at 7 p.m., you will once again have the opportunity to gather together for our annual Advent general penance service since the pandemic of covid 19. Joining us is Fr. Peter Iorio from Our Lady of Fatima, Alcoa and Fr. Gilbert Diaz, from Seymour Holy Family Church. There will be a brief service as we prepare for private confessions and absolutions. I encourage your participation, because the fruits can lead to a greater reception of Jesus during the holy days ahead.

God
poem

In today's First Reading, the Deuterocanonical prophet Baruch is giving a message of hope to the suffering Israelites in exile. In the midst of their mourning, he is able to say to the grieving City of that God has not abandoned her or her children. Indeed, he delivers a poem about the vindication of Jerusalem, the defeat of Israel's enemies, and the joy that God's commands will bring upon ancient Israel. This prophet invites the weeping Jerusalem to rejoice and *stand upon the heights to watch the return of the exiles*.

Thus, here at St. Joseph the Worker, together with Fr. Diaz, Fr. Iorio and myself, each penitent can return from the slavery of sin to the freedom Christ brings. In the Second Reading, Paul engages all of us to increase our Christian love with awareness and holy understanding, leading us to discern interior truth. This message helps us to prepare in the proper fashion for Christ's Second Coming.

In the Gospel, we begin our focus on St. John the Baptist, as he challenges the Jews to prepare their lives for their long-awaited Messiah by repenting of their sins, renewing their lives, and expressing their sorrow wherein they receive the baptism of repentance. We eagerly can prepare our hearts and lives for Jesus our Savior to be reborn in us during this holy time. We have to fill in the "valleys" of our souls, eroded by our shallow prayer life and hollow form of living. We especially ask St. John the Baptist's intervention as we pray with him these Sundays of Advent.

Therefore, it is that time of the year to renew ourselves, remove grudges or hatred, thus clearing away all the debris that prevents us from enjoying the genuine graces that come with Christmas. As kids, growing up, my mom and dad would always encourage us to go to confession in order to receive the real gift of Christmas. Christmas is not so much of the presents we were always joyful to receive, (even though those were important also), but they were not the principal gifts.

Jesus is very explicit about this in Matthew 6:14-15, when he says, "*For if you forgive men their transgressions, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.*" We continue in this period of preparation and waiting with growing tenderness for our Incarnate Lord.

Blessed Second Sunday of Advent!