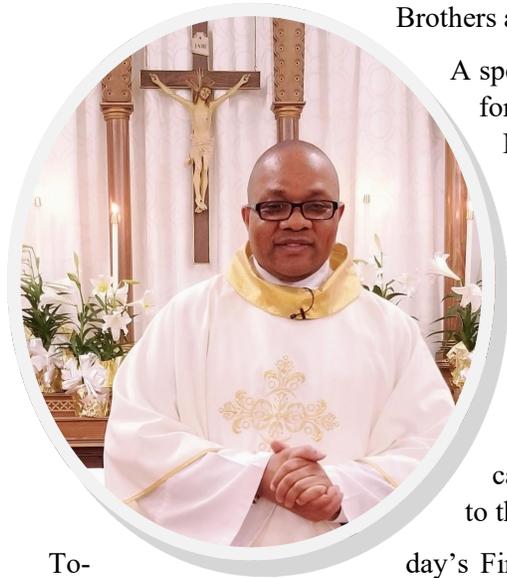


FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and Peace!



A special note of appreciation to all of you who joined us last Sunday for the Coronation of Our Blessed Mother in this our Month of Mary. Each Fourth Sunday of Eastertide, the universal Church observes Good Shepherd Sunday and the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Historically, I recall one of those Vocations' rally in Nigeria as I was discerning the religious life. Excited young priests and religious assembled to tout the engaging qualities of their vocations, but that day was not the time for my *calling*. At a later moment, a much stronger magnetism surfaced wherein it was boldly obvious that I was to serve others with my whole life. With Mother's Day observed today, we can imitate our Holy Mother's meekness and humility in relation to the mothers in our lives, as we grow in our vocations as offspring!

To-day's First Reading describes how Paul and Barnabas firmly elected to follow the voice of the Good Shepherd, and how, like their Master, were rebuffed and rejected when they tried to share the good news of salvation. This is not unlike our Lord Jesus' expulsion from the synagogue and the risk of being lynched by those who gathered for prayer. In the Second Reading, St. John envisions Jesus as both the glorified Lamb *and* the Shepherd. With clear reference in this passage to the saints, St. John's vision assures his readers that every person who follows Christ, leading others to Him, will share everlasting life with Him. Never give up those prayers for that person in your world who desperately needs our Lord.

The above aligns with the consoling message in our Gospel, that no one can snatch the sheep out of His Father's hands! The commission is that pastors and lay people alike should be *good shepherds* to those entrusted to their care. The title "pastor" means "feeder of the sheep." A shepherd leads, feeds, nurtures, comforts, corrects, directs and protects his flock — responsibilities that belong to every church leader. St. Mark says: "he had compassion on them for they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mk 6:33-34). He will not rest content until there be but one flock encompassing all peoples. This weekend, the Church makes the clarion call to pastors, parents, teachers, doctors, nurses and government officials to fulfill the above golden rules. As good Christians, we are called also to grow and become good sheep within Jesus' fold. He is ever striving to make us more perfect members of His flock. Hence, as the good sheep of the parish, parishioners are expected to hear and follow the voice of the shepherd. You may accomplish this through the following: through various homilies, *lectio divina*, spiritual counseling and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This spiritual closeness goes beyond our neighbor and is experienced most intimately in our Eucharistic Celebration when we are so profoundly close in relationship to our Lord.

If the Holy Spirit moves you to make grace filled suggestions for our faith community, we can surely engage in that dialogue. Let's make this a day to pray and encourage vocations to the priestly and religious life so that The Universal Church may have more good shepherds to lead, feed, and protect the Catholic community all over the world. However, for those few bad shepherds in our world, your ongoing prayers are dearly needed.

Happy Sunday and Mother's Day!