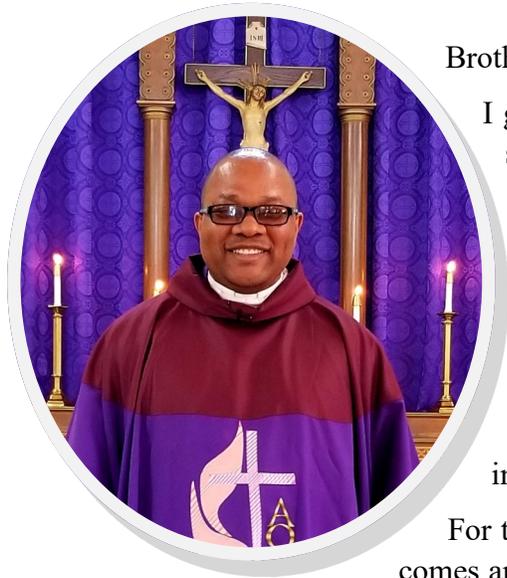


FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and Peace!

I grew up playing soccer, which is a fundamentally different setup from baseball. I am not a huge fan of baseball, because the dynamics of throwing, hitting, pitching and catching leaves me in a state of tedium. When you miss three times, I understand you are thrown out. Not so with our Lord! Today's liturgy instead tells of a patient God who provides many chances for sinners to repent. Thus, it is an invitation to understand our Lord's boundless desire to share His love and mercy with all His creation as evident in the readings this weekend.

For the Second Sunday in a row, that reference to *Covenant* becomes apparent as God chooses Moses as leader and liberator of his afflicted people. In that brilliant 'burning bush' dialogue between Moses and the Lord, we behold God's compassion towards His people as they suffer the fate of enslavement. Our God loves us and desires that we be free from all bondage. In the Second reading, St. Paul warns us and reminds the Church in Corinth how displeased our God was with the people's grumbling that took place in the desert, how He chastised and struck them down. For you and me, how inspiring if we could direct our prayers and thanksgiving for our many blessings, each time we find ourselves complaining. The merciful and gracious God is also just and demanding, and hence we must strive to be free from all forms of immorality and idolatry.

Our Gospel of 'the second chance' continues to correspond with the theme of God's chastisement towards His people, inviting them to repent of their sins, renew their lives, or perish in a violent end! Using the parable of the barren fig tree, God patiently waits for us to repent, giving us yet another year. Now is the most wonderful time to return to the Lord, seeking the Holy Spirit as a guide and comforter during Lent. Here at St Joseph the Worker, I expect to be joined by two priests on March 24th in administering the sacrament of God's forgiveness to parishioners eager to come for confession.

Lent is an ideal time "to dig around and enrich" the tree of our life so that it may produce fruits of repentance, reconciliation with forgiveness and compassion towards others. Ultimately, the Father always gives us a second chance; in this way, why can't we extend that second chance to others? As we ask for His forgiveness, why not think of forgiving your fellow brother/sister? May we keep rethinking our faith and even repent when needed – in order to keep bearing the fruits of God's unconditional love and mercy. May God's grace strengthen us as we draw close to the high solemnity of our Lord.

Lenten blessings!