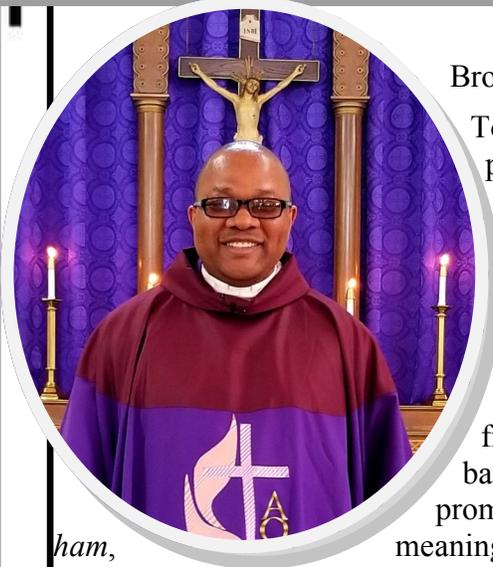


FROM THE DESK OF

Fr. Julius



Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!

Today's liturgy, this second Sunday of Lent, raises our Lord's passage from His desert experience to the great mountaintop of transformation. All our focus directs us towards this sacred event. The Holy Spirit, present in the cloud during the Transfiguration, fills and renews our lives during Lent. We descend from this experience and we draw great strength; thereupon enabling us to more readily tend to those who need that love.

Our First Reading presents a 'recasting' of the patriarch Abram from heathen into intense believer in the One God, ready to embark upon a great mission. With great spiritual significance, God promises to bless Abram, bestowing upon him the new name *Abram*, meaning 'father of many.' In Nigeria, we have similar customs when we are baptized, taking a saint's name as either model or intercessor. Hence my parents baptized me *Julius* in addition to my traditional birth name *Okai* (which means "the Guide" in my native language). In our Second Reading, St. Paul in a personal letter encourages the young Timothy to live the type of holy life expected of Christians, through God's Grace.

In today's Gospel relating Jesus' enigmatic mountain experience, our Lord is revealed "covered with majesty and splendor, wrapped in light as with a garment," [Ps 104:1-2] exalted high above Moses and Elijah. How central that our Lord appears in our lives in this new and profound way, the foretaste of His Resurrection! Perhaps Jesus' transfiguration allowed Him to consult His Heavenly Father, to ascertain God's plan for His Son's Passion and Resurrection. Some theologians suggest it was to make his chosen disciples aware of His divine glory, and so strengthen their spirits in their pending time of trial. I also see the all merciful God displaying his abundant mercy decisively on Moses, who is even now transported into the final and eternal Jerusalem. What a consolation!

One of the wonders of our liturgy is that *we* also experience transfiguration, which we call transubstantiation, as we participate in the great liturgy of the Holy Mass. In each holy offering of bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Jesus becomes wholly present. Hence, just as the Transfiguration strengthened the Apostles in their time of trial, each Holy Mass should be our source of Heavenly strength against our own temptations, and a source of renewal in our lives. Not only the Holy Mass, but every sacrament that we receive transforms us! Remember the hope and affirmation that comes from this weekend's readings, especially in those moments of doubt or despair: "*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*"

A Luminous Lenten Season!