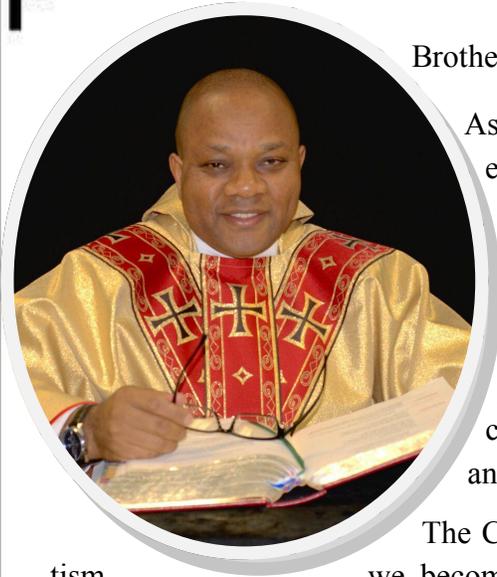


# FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!

As we cherished each aspect of the Christmas season, dwelling especially on the Lord as an infant, Holy Mother Church rapidly redirects us in today's liturgy! Now we are caught up to our precious Lord as an adult in the sacred mystery of His Baptism. You might have noticed during today's three readings that each links us closely to the Baptism of Jesus, either prophetic in nature or the actual event. In today's Feast, Jesus is commissioned by the Father for the work he is about to begin and anointed by the Holy Spirit to undertake that mission.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that through Baptism, we become sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, members of his Church, heirs of heaven, and temples of the Holy Spirit. Consider that at your baptism, God, Holy Spirit and Jesus were all with you! "Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to the other Sacraments" (CCC #1213).

Looking at the first reading from Isaiah when the remnant was getting discouraged, Isaiah holds out hope for them; but they must repent, stay focused on God, and learn to surrender to God's ways. We always have Isaiah to remind us about returning to God. Would that every person be able to draw from this inexhaustible source of salvation.

Like me, many of us were either baptized as infants or later in life through RCIA. Whether or not we were too young to remember, we all believe that the Holy Spirit took its abode in our soul: that the anointing with the Oil of Chrism consecrated us in the image of the Father's Anointed One, Jesus; that the pouring of Blessed Water would signify our Lord's highly mystical immersion in the Jordan; and that the candle ignited from the Paschal Candle would be a symbol of the light of faith safeguarded by our parents and godparents. Beyond this, baptism is not simply a ceremony. It has a profound impact on how we speak our attitude and our conduct towards people.

Our Lord's baptism takes on the importance of a second creation as we witness the entire Trinity. As a result, the creation story is not over! God continues to create and has declared us co-creators, co-authors, of the next chapter. When we were baptized and became members of Jesus' family of disciples, the Church opened for us the great riches that draw us day in and out, but most importantly, "You must concentrate on pleasing God alone, and if He is pleased, you must be pleased." St Pio of Pietrelcina.

Blessed Sunday!