

The Bells of St. Mary's The Church of the Immaculate Conception

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 16, 2020

From Fr. George Okoro, MSP

I saw a cigarette pack somewhere with the picture of a young couple, both of them tall and good-looking. Each held a stick of cigarette between their fingers, their eyes locked in contact, smiling. They looked happy, healthy, and cool. Under their picture was inscribed this message: "More than just a cigarette." Catchy, huh? However, at the base of the pack was boldly inscribed another message: "SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, and May Complicate Pregnancy." Definitely scary.

Here the potential smoker is given two choices: smoke this cigarette, look cool, but (likely) suffer the diseases listed below; protect yourself from the under listed diseases by staying away from cigarette smoking, but run the risk of appearing 'uncool'. The choice is yours: choose between looking cool and staying healthy. That is the central message of today's first reading. The Book of Sirach says: "[God] has set before you fire and water, to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand." Even though God "understands man's every deed" and does not give anyone license to sin, he still respects human freedom. Whatever a person chooses shall be given him. Those who reach for fire are sure to get burned; those who reach for water would get cooled.

From this passage, Sirach expresses firm belief in both personal freedom and responsibility for one's actions. This is authentic freedom, freedom with consequences. Thus, the best choice is clear, trust in God and keep his commandments to stay on the path of salvation; do this and you shall live! What does it mean to live? The promise of life offered to those who heed God's commands is not simply earthly life. For that reason, St. Paul writes to the Corinthians of a wisdom "not of this age nor of the rulers of this age." That wisdom is Christ Jesus, the son of God, sacrificed on the cross for the sins of all, and risen to glory. The eternal reward prepared for those who love God is "what eye has not seen, and ear has not heard," a sublime truth revealed to believers through the Holy Spirit.

In today's Gospel, Jesus continues his sermon on the mount. As Moses brought down the commandments of the law from atop mount Sinai, Jesus in his role as divine legislator promulgated the law of the new covenant from the hilltop. Christ is the authoritative interpreter of the Torah and the scriptures, and he declared that he came to fulfill rather than to abolish the law and the prophets. In some cases, he teaches his disciples that they must internalize the words of the law, in other cases, they must pursue a higher standard. Sometimes this means foregoing one's right to retribution in order to practice charity.

Thus, the commandment not to kill is raised to the higher standard of avoiding anger and quarrelsome words with one's brothers and sisters. A positive requirement is placed on believers to seek reconciliation before offering their gifts at the altar. The commandment against adultery becomes an occasion for Jesus to reinforce the indissolubility of marriage and to invite his disciples to internalize this command by avoiding lustful thoughts and gazes. Beyond avoiding lying in false testimony, Jesus exhorts all to speak in simplicity with truth and to avoid the bombast and sacrilege of swearing and profane oaths.

Jesus, in his message, laid out the laws and the fulfillment of the laws to his disciples. Then he let them make a choice. He made them to understand the consequence of the choices they would make, but he did not threaten them, neither did he force them to do things they would rather not do, even if it were right thing. Christianity teaches that one is not forced to do God's will; one is encouraged to do God's will. A person is told about the benefits of following the way of righteousness and the consequences of deviating from this way. However, one is not forced to choose. As followers of Christ, we are called to reach for water, to stretch our hands and receive the cooling water of life which Jesus offers us. If, however, we choose to reach for fire nobody would stop us. Placed before you are life and death, salvation and perdition. The choice is yours.

Stewardship

*Tithing - God's Plan for Giving on Sunday, 2/09/2020 our Offering was \$ 3, 334.00

** Today's our second collection is for the Church Property Insurance.

*This Monday In observance to Presidents Day the Rectory will be closed on Monday February 17, 2020

Cardinal's Annual Stewardship Appeal

2020 Appeal Goal Members of the parish, here are your numbers: Goal: \$37,500 Pledged: \$ 7,145.00

Paid: \$7,145.00 Participants: 10 Ave. Gift: \$714.50

Thank you so much for your cooperation again for those that started their pledge this year! Please help us reach our goal for 2020.

Celeste Kabemba, Campaign Manager The 41st Cardinal's Annual Stewardship Appeal To donate you can go to cardinalsappeal.org, click on Donate, select an amount, and direct your gift to our Church: Immaculate Conception, Yonkers

YOUTH CORNER

The next meeting for the youth group will be Saturday February 29, 2020 in the Church Hall from 12:00 p.m. at 3:00 p.m.

Sundays Readings:

First Reading: Sirach 15: 15-20 p. 64

Immense is the Lord's wisdom. The Lord God sees every created thing and understands every human deed. Human beings have life and death before them, and they receive whichever they choose.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 119: 1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34 p. 65 Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 2: 6-10 p. 65 Paul wrote that real wisdom is God's: hidden, mysterious, planned and prepared from the glory of those who love the Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 5: 17-37 p. 66 Jesus said he came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. He described such fulfillment as a matter not of legal argumentation but of holiness, reconciliation and the obedience of faith. Jesus encouraged the disciples to let their "Yes" mean "Yes" and their "No" mean "No."

Religious Education

February: 2020

2/22/20- No Religious Education Classes

2/22/20 - For children being baptized in the Religion program Baptism will be at 2:30 pm.

2/23/20 - Sunday Confirmation Class 2nd Retreat at Stepinac High School. Please be at the Rectory at 11:00 am.
Please eat lunch at home.

2/29/20 - Religious Education Classes Parents please bring your children to Mass as a family and study their PRAYERS.

Peter's Pence Collection

Thank you for your generous support in last week's Peter's Pence Collection! As a parish, we collected \$1,171.00 Our contributions will be combined with those from our brothers and sisters around the world to help Pope Francis provide essential relief to people in need. If you missed the collection, it is not too late to give. Visit www.usccb.org/nationalcollections.

Mass Intentions for the week of February 15 to February 23, 2020

Saturday, February 15, 2020:

12:05 pm - Selma Louise Peoples + * Donna Peoples

5:00 pm - Joanne Kunny + * Kunny Family

7:30pm - Sagrado Corazón De Jesus * Lila Pérez

Sunday, February 16, 2020:

7:30 am - Julián Hernandez Gálvez + * Familia Hernandez & Gálvez

9:00 am - Eneroliza Guzman & Ramón De Jesús + * Paula Manzueta

11:00 am - Domingos & Coltild Rodríguez + * Eduardo & Esther Rodríguez

Monday, February 17, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Miguel Sepulveda + * Magaly Pichardo

Tuesday February 18, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Deinbo Macharry Birthday Blsg. * Christine Macharry

Wednesday, February 19, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Josephine Fernandes + * Son DelRio Fernandes

Thursday, February 20, 2020

8:15am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Available/Disponibile

7:00 pm - Hector Jose Marmolejos +* Familia Memolejos Jaquez

Friday, February 21, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Rafael Navarro + * Carmen Navarro

Saturday, February 22, 2020:

12:05 pm - Available/Disponibile

5:00 pm - Marta Tapang + * Roselyn Fajardo

7:30pm - María Dolores Blanco + * Digna Pichardo

Sunday, February 23, 2020:

7:30 am - For the Parishioner/ Por los Parroquianos

9:00 am - Difuntos de La Familia Filpo + * Luisa Filpo

11:00 am - Raquel De Rodriguez + * Genoveva Brown & Family

*+Indicates deceased *Indicates the person (s) who requested the Mass.*

BIBLE STUDY

"Ignorance of the Scripture is Ignorance of Christ!" - St Jerome, 5th Century
Our Bible studies have started on Monday nights at 7:00 pm in the Parish Hall.

Studies are both in Spanish and in English.

MASS BOOK

If you want to book a Mass for any particular Intention, call the Parish Office .

HELP KEEP OUR CHURCH CLEAN

We are still working on the Guidelines for the use and rental of our Parish Hall.

CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Tax statements are ready if you have not receive your statement and will like it you can come by the office.