

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

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time February 23, 2020

From Fr. George Okoro, MSP

On the Veterans Day of November 1996, Phan Thi Kim Phuc, now 33, came to the black granite Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a wife and mother, to tell several thousand spectators that she forgives those who bombed her village and has put the past behind her. Kim Phuc placed a wreath at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington and delivered a short speech. When Kim Phuc was only 9 years old, her picture was taken by an Associated Press photographer and it stirred the conscience of the world. Moments after the picture was taken, Kim Phuc lost consciousness and was taken to a hospital by the photographer, Nick Ut, who later won a Pulitzer Prize for the photo. Her village had just been hit by a napalm bomb attack by the South Vietnamese air force sponsored by the USA air force. Her two cousins were killed instantly. Kim Phuc's clothes were burned off her. In the photograph, this little girl was running, naked, in pain and terror. In front of the wall inscribed with the names of more than 58,000 U.S. war dead, Kim Phuc said that she was focused on the future. Speaking to a hushed crowd in Washington, she made the following statement: "I have suffered a lot from my physical and emotional pain. Sometimes I thought I could not live, but God saved my life and gave me Faith and Hope. If I could talk face to face with the pilot who dropped the bomb, I would tell him we cannot change history, but we should try to do things for the present and for the future to promote peace." This is the type of forgiveness that Jesus was preaching about in today's gospel: tough, wise, divine.

To be known as true Christians, we must forgive those who offend or injure us. We must love all people, whether they be friends or enemies. G. K. Chesterton says: "We are commanded to love our neighbors and our enemies; they are generally the same people." This is very true for all of us. It is very easy for me to love (in a theoretical way) all Japanese, all Chinese, all Africans – the harmless, faraway outsiders who never tread on my corns. But it is my neighbors, those among whom I live and work, who are liable to injure me and thus become my enemies. Yet Jesus says I should love them. Love of neighbor is incompatible with hatred of enemies for the simple reason that your enemies are, more often than not, your neighbors.

The Greek word used for loving enemies is not storage (natural love towards family members), or philia (love of close friends), or eros (passionate love between a young man and woman), but agápe, which is the invincible benevolence or good will for another's highest good. Since agápe is not natural, practicing it is possible only with God's help. Agápe love is a choice more than a feeling. We choose to love, not because our enemies deserve our love, but because Jesus loves them so much that he died for them. We have in the Acts of the Apostles the example of St. Stephen, the first martyr, who prayed for those who were putting him to death.

We need to have a forgiving heart: Jesus demands that we should forgive, pardon and be generous whether or not our offenders deserve it, and even if we are not loved in return. He also tells us to pray for those who, it may seem, willfully cause us suffering, hardship and unhappiness. Jesus understands how difficult it is for a wife to forgive a cheating husband. He understands how difficult it is for a child to forgive his/her careless parents. All the same, he encourages us to forgive in order to free oneself from the shackles of resentment. Resentment destroys the bearer, no matter how justified he/she is to bear it. Forgiveness brings about freedom and even neutralizes the power of the offender.

One Sunday in a rural parish, the pastor's homily was on today's Gospel: forgiving our enemies. Toward the end of the homily, he asked his congregation, "How many of you have forgiven their enemies?"

All responded by raising their hands, except one small elderly lady. "Mrs. Jones?" inquired the pastor, are you not willing to forgive your enemies? "I don't have any." she replied, smiling sweetly. "Mrs. Jones, That is very unusual. How old are you?" "Ninety-three," she replied. "Oh Mrs. Jones, what a blessing and a lesson to us all you are. Would you please come down in front of this congregation and tell us all how a person can live ninety-three years and not have an enemy in the world?" The little sweetheart of a lady tottered down the aisle, faced the congregation, and said "I outlived the old hags."

Well, you may not want to be sarcastic like sweet Mrs. Jones, but you could learn to outlive all your hurts. Forgive and be free. That is Jesus' central message today. Forgive, be free.

Stewardship

*Tithing - God's Plan for Giving on Sunday, 2/16/2020 our Offering was \$ 3, 508.00

Food Collection:

Next week we will have our monthly food collection for the needy in our community and as always thank you for your generosity in helping those less fortunate than ourselves.

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 your pledges! Please, we are still need more pledges to reach our parish goal for 2020.

Lenten Season is a good time to consider giving towards Cardinal's 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

Do not forget next week meeting for the Youth group Saturday February 29, 2020 in the Church Hall from 12:00 p.m. ~ 3:00 p.m. Parents help to remind your young ones

Sundays Readings:

First Reading: Leviticus 19: 1-2, 17-18 p. 67

Moses urges the Israelites to holiness. They must bear no hatred in their hearts. Rather, they must follow this law: love your neighbor as yourself.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103: 1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13 p. 68 The Lord is kind and merciful.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 3: 16-23 p. 68 We are all temples of the Holy Spirit, and as such belong to God. We must never think that we are self-sufficient, or that we alone rule our lives. We must beware the wisdom of the world, which is not of God. We belong to Christ, and therefore must live in Christ and depend on Christ.

Gospel: Matthew 5: 38-48 p. 69 Jesus tells us that we must return good for evil and love for hate. We must go the extra mile and love our enemies. We must strive to be perfect, just as God is perfect. This will prove that we belong to the Father.

Religious Education

February: 2020

2/29/20 - Religious Education Classes

March 2020

3/07/20-Religious Education Classes Meeting for First Communion 11:30am in the School Cafeteria.

3/14/20-Religious Education Classes Children in grades 3—6 will be doing their Reconciliation at 9:30 am.

3/21/20-Religious Education Classes

3/28/20-Religious Education Classes

Parents please remind your children to bring their pink signing sheet to Mass for the priest to sign. Have them study their Prayers.

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 Intentions for the week of
February 22 to March 1, 2020**

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

Monday, February 24, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile
12:05 pm - St. Anthony * Julia Diaz

Tuesday February 25, 2020:

8:15 am - Francisco Dougan (Healing) * Claudia Dougan
12:05 pm - Sokari Macharry Birthday Blsg.. * Christine Macharry

Wednesday, February 26, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile
12:05 pm - Evelyn Esch + * Susanne Currivan
3:00 pm—Service/Servicio
7:30 pm Saturnino & Amelia Rodriguez + * Julia Diaz

Thursday, February 27, 2020

8:15am - Available/Disponibile
12:05 pm - Aida & Saturnino Rodriguez + * Julia Diaz
7:00 pm - Anthony Cabrales + * George & Carmen Cabrales

Friday, February 28, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile
12:05 pm - Available/Disponibile

Saturday, February 29, 2020:

12:05 pm - Available/Disponibile
5:00 pm - Available/Disponibile
7:30pm - Alicea Esperaza Fuentes + * Argentina Fuentes

Sunday, March 1, 2020:

7:30 am - For the Parishioner/ Por los Parroquianos
9:00 am - Margot Navarro + * Ofelia Otero
11:00 am - Available/Disponibile

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

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.