



The Parish of Saints Philip and James
One Carow Place, St. James, NY 11780
631-584-5454

Fourth Sunday In Ordinary Time January 28, 2018



“The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light; on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death, light has arisen.” Mt 4:16

*“With Philip & James we pray to live lives worthy of the call to be
Apostles of Hope”*

Daily Mass: 7:30am and 9:15 am
Saturday 5pm Sunday: 8am 10 am 12noon

Parish Center Office Hours:

*Sunday ~ Closed
Monday: 9am-8pm*

*Tuesday & Wednesday: 9am-5pm
Thursday: 9am-8pm*

*Friday: 9am-12 Noon
Saturday: 10am-2pm*

Parish Center Phone ~ 631-584-5454

Parish Center Fax~ 631-862-9675

Web ~ www.sspj.org

Pastoral Team

Father Tom Haggerty		Pastor
Father Patrick Osei-Poku		Associate Pastor
Deacon Ronald Blasius		Deacon
Deacon John Keenan		Deacon
Deacon Ken Maher		Deacon
Margaret Adams		Director of Music
Virginia Portanova		Business Manager
John Cordes		Director of Facilities
Lynn Sisti		Coordinator of Parish Social Ministry
Charlotte Czujko		Religious Education Coordinator Grades 1-2
Barbara Luna		Religious Education Coordinator Grades 3-6
Dominick Avento		Religious Education Coordinator Grades 7-8
Suzanne Fitzgibbon		Religious Education Administrator
Frank Brancaccio		Youth Minister

Pastoral Council

Rita Byrne, Claire DiCarlo, Chris Donnelly, Ryan Doyle, Richard Frazita, Lou Guerra, Cynthia Lombardi, Martin Marut, Ann Mondrone, Mary Ann Pose, Noel Rannazzisi, Tom Sica, Robert Thompson

Trustees

Jerry Linder ~ Tina Cafaro

SSPJ School—Principal Ruth E. Testa

School Phone : 631-584-7896 School Fax: 631-584-3258

Sacraments

Baptism— Celebrated twice per month. Parents are asked to register at the Pastoral Center for Pre-Baptism Program.

Marriage—Couples are asked to contact the Pastoral Center before visiting the reception hall. The Marriage Preparation process is nine months before your proposed wedding date.

Confirmation—Seventh and Eighth grade students are prepared to celebrate through Religious Ed or SSPJ School. Adults prepare through RCLA.

Reconciliation— Available Saturdays from 4:00pm-5:00pm in the Church or by contacting the Parish Center for an appointment.

Anointing of the Sick— In case of serious, unexpected illness, please contact the Parish Center office to arrange for a Priest to pray with the person who is ill. Anointing of the Sick is held on the first Sunday of the month following the 12:00mass please see the Sacristan before mass.

R.C.I.A— Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (non-Catholic adults desiring to become Catholic) are asked to contact the Parish Center Office.

Eucharistic Adoration In The Church— Thursday 2-4pm Friday 8-9pm



TO KILL A Mockingbird

Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize winning story comes to life.



The trial of the century is about to begin.

**Live Theatrical Production at
TODAY at SSPJ Parish!**

**Tickets to this amazing production
Cost: \$15.00 per ticket (cash or check)**

**Delicious Cake and Coffee will be served
during Intermission**

**Proceeds will help defray the costs of our
Parish Easter Book distribution.**

SSPJ SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE: TODAY: JANUARY 28, 2018

Saints Philip and James School and Academy

Open House and Registration

Sunday, January 28, 2018

11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Saints Philip and James School is dedicated to providing a Catholic education which nourishes the respect for individual diversity, fosters cooperative learning and promotes global awareness. Our primary commitment is to integrate the Gospel message with the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development of our students, thus enabling them to become the leaders of tomorrow.



Full-day Pre-K/Kindergarten Programs
Foreign Languages – Spanish and Mandarin
Before and After School Care
Band Program including Violin
Weekly attendance at Mass
NYSSMA Member
Student prayer services throughout the year
Variety of After School Programs/Clubs
Community-related service projects
Drama Club/Broadway Jr.
9th Grade Math Class
Member of Catholic Middle Schools
Athletic Association
iPad/Chromebook Classrooms
Success on Catholic High School Entrance Exam
Weekly Electives for Academy students
And much more!!

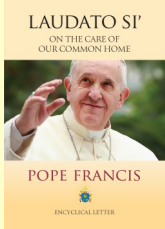


For further information and to arrange a tour, please call 631-584-7896
www.sspjschool.net

Parish Social Ministry

Pope Francis in his encyclical "Laudato si" sees a connection between concern for the environment and the needs of the poor.

"Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society"
Laudato Si 91



All are invited to join the next meeting of the Peace & Justice Ministry

Wednesday, February 7, 2018
At 4PM
In the Parish Social Ministry Office

Lenten SOUP Supper

Please **SAVE THE DATE**

SSPJ PARISH LENTEN SOUP SUPPER

WILL BE HELD ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2018

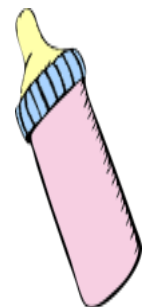
AT 6:00PM IN THE AUDITORIUM

ANNUAL RESPECT LIFE COMMUNION BREAKFAST Sunday Feb. 4th, 2018

After the 8AM and 10AM Masses
In the auditorium.

Any Questions call 631-862-9370
Free will offering

Bring your family – Support Life



January 21, 2018

Dear Parishioners of Saints Philip and James Church,

On December 17th, we reached out to you at the end of each of the masses regarding our service project trip to Guatemala. Thank you so much to Father Tom and Father Patrick for leading us as Apostles of Hope and giving us the opportunity to speak to you. In response to our request for support, you kept us in your prayers, and together as a parish community contributed \$3918. We were overwhelmed by your kindness and generosity. Words alone can't express our deep felt gratitude, and on behalf of us and the people we served in Guatemala - THANK YOU!!!

Throughout the efforts made to support the people in Guatemala, your prayers and financial contributions allowed all of you to serve as Apostles of Hope. Through the organization Youth Service International, we dedicated the funds and our time as follows:

- Working on the construction of a water treatment system
- Donating clothing and toys to families
- Painting a house
- Playing games and activities with the children
- Supplying scholarship money for students to attend high school
- Praying for those in the local community



We would also like to thank our friend, Noah Hoonhout, who is also an SSPJ School graduate and parishioner. After participating in this service project the year prior, he encouraged us to join him in his second visit to Guatemala. Being a part of this experience was truly life changing. Wherever we are, let's make being an Apostle of Hope contagious!

Thank you again for your support, prayers and generosity. May God bless you.

Sincerely,

Brian Willman and Liam Willman

SSPJ Parish Calendar For The Week of January 28th, 2018

Sunday, January 28th, 2018

8:00am	Wash Kit Gang Superbowl Raffle	School Lobby
8:30am	RCIA	Philip & James Room
10:00am	Children's Liturgy	Auditorium
11:00am	Stained Glass Club	Stained Glass Wkshp.
3:00pm	LIVE THEATRE To Kill A Mockingbird	Auditorium
7:00pm	AA Meeting	Philip & James Room

Monday, January 29th, 2018

5:45pm REO Confirmation Mentor Conversations Auditorium

Tuesday, January 30th, 2018:

1:30pm	Spirit of Love Prayer Group	Prayer Room Church
4:30pm	Children's Choir Rehearsal	Choir Loft
7:00pm	Confirmation I Reconciliation	Church
7:30pm	Chords of Faith Rehearsal	Choir Loft
8:00pm	Boy Scout Leadership Meeting	Monte Building

Wednesday, January 31st, 2018:

5:45pm REO Confirmation Mentor Conversations Auditorium
7:00pm Youth Ministry Auditorium

Thursday, February 1st, 2018:

10:00am	REO 5th & 6th Grade Catechist Wkshp	SSPJ Room
2:00pm	Eucharistic Adoration	Church
7:00pm	REO 5th & 6th Grade Catechist Wkshp	SSPJ Room
7:30pm	Adult Choir Rehearsal	Choir Loft
7:30pm	Pre-Baptism Class	SSPJ Room

Friday, February 2nd, 2018:

3:00pm	Stained Glass Club	Stained Glass Wkshp
7:00pm	AA Meeting	Philip & James Room
8:00pm	First Friday Nocturnal Adoration	Church

Saturday, February 3rd, 2018:

No activities scheduled

Weekly Collection: Sunday, January 21st, 2018



Sunday Collection: \$15,268.
Faith Direct: \$3,823.
Children's Jug: \$ 92.
Snow Removal Collection: \$3,695.
Total Collection: \$22,878.

Many thanks for your generous support of SSPJ!
Sts. Philip & James Parish



**LAST CHANCE TO BUY
WASHKIT GANG
RAFFLE TICKETS
DRAWING TODAY
AFTER THE 12:00 NOON
MASS**

Wash Kit Gang Annual Super Bowl Raffle!

Held after all masses
Please stop by and purchase raffle tickets that support the wonderful work of the SSPJ Wash Kit Gang.

All proceeds go toward providing supplies for making wash kits and messages of hope to homeless families and individuals living at shelters on Long Island.

The Wash Kit Gang Ministry also provides teaching and service opportunities for young people in our parish to help those among us that are the most vulnerable in our society.

The tickets are \$5.00 each

1st Prize- 55" Samsung Smart

TV

Donated by Baranowski, Hamilton, Karvecky, Koke, and Zito Families

2nd Prize- AMC Movie Package and O Solo Mio Gift Card

Donated by AMC Loews Stony Brook and a Generous Parishioner

3rd Prize- Super Bowl Party Pack - A \$80 Value

Donated by Seaqua Deli



Celebrating a mass in memory of a loved one is a meaningful offering, here at Sts. Philip & James Parish.

We offer the following ways to remember those closest to our hearts...

Mass Offerings~\$20.00(Daily & Week-end masses)

Pro-Life Rose Offering~\$15.00

Altar Candles~Sanctuary Lamp~Bread & Wine~Altar Flowers

Each may be dedicated on a weekly basis for a contribution of \$20.00 each

Please visit the Parish Center for more information or contact us at 631-584-5454

The Catholic Daughters of the Americas ~ Court #1074,

Saint James, N.Y.

PRESENTS

Songs of the Legends

FEATURING

TOM BANDISE



**Croon along to your favorite songs of the
50's ~ 60's ~ 70's and more....**

~ Light fare followed by coffee and dessert ~
~You are welcome to BYOB~

Cost \$20 per person

**Saturday ~ February 10, 2018 7 – 10 pm.
Saints Philip & James Church Auditorium**

359 Clinton Ave., St. James NY

For additional information and/or to make a reservation
please call Virginia Portanova @ 631-361-7365

A Note From Our Music Ministry

The Music Ministry is always looking for new members. Now is a good time to join and be a part of our Easter Masses. become an Apostle of Hope-Join the music ministry. WE NEED YOU!!!! Men are especially needed. Bite size pieces of time are also available.

Children grades 3-6 and teens grade 7-12 join the music ministry and sing for masses.

Now that we see you at mass why not help out and join a music group. You are always welcome.

Come see me or a choir member after Mass on the weekend. We would be more than happy to give you more information.

Margaret Adams
Director of Music



Religious Education News for the Week of January 28th, 2018

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2018 COMMUNION II RECONCILIATION

11:30AM RECONCILIATION SERVICE

FOR THE CLASSES OF THE FOLLOWING TEACHERS:

MRS. MARIA BROCHARD
MRS. NOELLE CIMINIELLO
MRS. MICHELE NESTOR
MRS. MELISSA SHERIDAN
MRS. KATHLEEN SWENSON

1:30 RECONCILIATION SERVICE

FOR THE CLASSES OF THE FOLLOWING TEACHERS:

MRS. PEGGY KOEPLIN
MR. JOHN MCGOVERN
MRS. CORIN NOCERA
MRS. LISA SCHWEITZER

THERE WILL BE NO CLASSES THIS WEEK FOR REO GRADES: 5&6

CATECHIST WORKSHOP FOR GRADES 5&6

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2018
10:00 AM OR 7:00PM
IN THE STS. PHILIP & JAMES ROOM**

Confirmation II Mentor Conversations:

**MONDAY, JANUARY 29, 2018
5:45pm**

**In the AUDITORIUM
CLASSES OF THE FOLLOWING TEACHERS:**

Mrs. Stickle

Mrs. Hampson

CLASSES OF THE FOLLOWING TEACHERS:

7:00pm

**Mr. Albergo
Mrs. Killilea
Mrs. Eschbach**



CONFIRMATION I RECONCILIATION

TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2018

7PM IN THE CHURCH



Confirmation II Mentor Conversations:

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2018
MAKE UP SESSION TO BE HELD AT
5:45PM
FOR ANYONE UNABLE TO ATTEND A
PREVIOUS SESSION**

Mass Intentions, For the week of January 28th, 2018

Saturday, January 27th, 2018

5:00pm Patricia Brown

Wednesday, January 31st, 2018

7:30am Carmela Pearce
9:15am Eva Maria Alaimo

Sunday, January 28th, 2018 For The Parishioners of SSPJ

8:00am Theresa O'Leary
10:00am Collective Mass:
12:00Noon Josephine Yonkowski
Vincent Pizzulli

Thursday, February 1st, 2018

7:30am John Ray
9:15am Collective Mass

Monday, January 29th, 2018

7:30am Henry Cacciola
9:15am

Friday, February 2nd, 2018

7:30am Thomas J. Dunn
9:15am

Tuesday, January 30th, 2018

7:30am Jerry Bruno
9:15am Ann Smith(Living)

Saturday, February 3rd, 2018

9:15am Joseph Agostino
5:00pm Adrea Charles

We Ask You to Remember Our Brothers & Sisters In your Prayers those who are ill...

Sunday, February 4th, 2018

8:00am For The Parishioners of SSPJ
10:00am Michael G. DiMeglio
12:00Noon Collective Mass:
Martin O'Brien
Lillian Hammond
James Sangemino
Josephine Yankowski

Anna Capizzio
Angela Amoroso
Angela Boccio McComb
AnnMarie M.
Baby Mattia Lubrano
Betty Schmidt
Brett Dowling
Brennan Steinorth
Bryan Van Colt
Carole Hennessy
Carol Walz
Catherine Burseind
Christel DeBlasio
Christopher Gerver
ChristopherTallarico
Dawn Kopel
Dylan Lauro
Eileen Zink
Elinor Glasser
Faith VanGostein
Florence Donahue
Ginny McAuley
Hillary Boehme
Jeanine EspositoTansey

Joe Alberigo
John Capizzio
John Hernandez
Julianne
Kathleen N.
Kitty Cronin,
Kylie Quigley
Laura Andrucki & family
Linda Sue
Louis Giordano
Marie DelCiello,
Marie Loughlin
Mary McDonough
Nancy Fornabia
Pasquale Campano
Pasquale Santoro
Patricia Casey
Robin Graham Denis
Raymond Fox
Rosemary Morgan
Suzanne McCue
Terence Hobbes
Teresa Orlik
Vivien Cordes

We Pray for those Who Serve



LCDR. MEGAN M. SHUTKA-VIK, USN
CAPT. WILSON MARKS, USN
CAPTAIN MICHAEL DOLAN, JR.
LT. COL. JOHN KAIRES
SPC. NICOLE A. CANNON
SGM. MICHAEL P. BORRELLI (US ARMY)
CAPT. JOHN TULLY, USN
LT. COL. JAMES TULLY, US ARMY
JOSEPH SAGGIO, USNC
CAPTAIN PAUL WILLMS
STAFF SGT. MICHAEL LONGHENRY
LT. COL. PAUL T. JACKSON,
STAFF SGT ALEXANDER PARRELLA, USAF
RICHARD SOTOMAYER, USAF
SGT. CONNOR F. SCOTT, USMC
CORPORAL DANIEL P. STEELE, USMC
SGT. CORY O'HARA USMC
CDR. ROBERT J. MARSH, USN
PFC. CHARLES CHRISTOPHER HOWELL
JOHN VINCENT KNOBLOCH, USMC
STEVEN CAVA, USN
ERIC SEELIN, USMC
CW2 CHRIS MUNZ
CW2 NATASHA WORTMAN
CORPORAL JAMES T. CASEY, USMC
GREGORY DEVANEY, USMC
SGT. JOSHUA MAHONEY, US ARMY
KEVIN JONES, U.S.C.G.
RICHARD MAIER, U.S.M.C.
PRIVATE JOSHUA OLSEN, USARNG
GLEN CRIMA-U.S. ARMY
PFC. ANTHONY SCIAMETTA
MARIO CATANIA, USMC
RYAN ANTHONY NASCIMENTO, U.S.M.C.
ENS. RYAN M. SHOWS U.S.N.
STAFF SGT. RYAN REXRODE U.S.M.C.

Safely Home...



Mary Brocco
Renee Pisotti
Thomas Vitale



Pre-K had so much fun learning about the Letter Bb!

Pre-K loves learning about NUMBERS, especially when they get to play BINGO!



Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?
I See Pre-K Looking at Me!

Silly Pre-K! Wake Up! Your Bear is Supposed to HIBERNATE, NOT You!





EARLY BIRD DISCOUNTS
NOW THROUGH FEBRUARY 14th

LEARN MORE!
516-935-CAMP
CampsRUs.org

CAMPS'R'US

WHERE SUMMER VACATION IS OUR JOB!

COMING SUMMER 2018 @ SAINTS PHILIP AND JAMES!

#BESTSUMMEREVER!

Campers, ages 3 and up, enjoy fun-filled summers with incredible activities, including Sports, Arts & Crafts, Swimming, Gaming, GaGa, Go Karts, Bowling, Field Trips, Special Events and much more. Our premier facilities, top-notch staff, and unique affordability have earned us the reputation as one of the best summer camps on Long Island!



FUN



FIELD TRIPS



FRIENDSHIPS

ACCREDITED · AWARD-WINNING · AFFORDABLE · SUMMER DAY CAMP FOR KIDS 3 & UP

Celebrating the Liturgy- With Grateful Hearts We Serve

PRESIDER SCHEDULE-FOR February 3rd & 4th, 2018

Saturday, February 3, 2018 5:00 PM	Sunday, February 4, 2018 8:00 AM MASS	Sunday, February 4, 2018 10:00 AM MASS	Sunday, February 4, 2018 12:00 MASS
Father Patrick Osei-Poku	Father Patrick Osei-Poku	Father Tom Haggerty	Father Tom Haggerty
Deacon Ron			

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS SCHEDULE -FOR February 3rd & 4th, 2018

Saturday, February 3, 2018 5:00 PM MASS	Sunday, February 4, 2018 8:00 AM MASS	Sunday, February 4, 2018 10:00 AM MASS	Sunday, February 4, 2018 12:00 NOON MASS
G. Alfano	E. Sica	A. Giordano	A. Santo
D. Toto	T. Sica	P. Schfilliti	D. Coppola
R. Byrne	K. Consenz	J. Alternative	B. Chandler
P. Damato	J. Giacalone	G. Amen	J. Hanrahan
D. Doran	W. VanGostein	D. Bleggi	V. Rubano
J. Duffy	G. Beisel	R. Bleggi	M. Peykar
A. Dunn	L. Beisel	M. Morbillo	P. Roman
D. Earl	C. Czujko	M. Sehne	P. Agoglia
E. Kaleita, Jr.	R. Doda, Sr.	M. Latino	M. Laub
J. Primavera	M. Dunn	C. Lombardi	E. Sotomayer

ALTAR SERVERS SCHEDULE -FOR February 3rd & 4th, 2018

Saturday, February 3, 2018 5:00PM MASS	Sunday, February 4, 2018 8:00AM MASS	Sunday, February 4, 2018 10:00 AM MASS	Sunday, February 4, 2018 12:00 NOON MASS
P. Bisel	M. Russo	B. Kieran	N. Hoonhout
C. Williams	A. Willman	J. Prew	S. Santos
J. Leber	B. Willman	M. Stephens	E. Zemen
M. Pappas	K. Dobokowski	A. Kaiser	A. Peykar
S. McCalvin	S. Dobokowski	N. Fazzini	

LECTOR SCHEDULE -FOR February 3rd & 4th, 2018

Saturday, February 3, 2018 5:00 PM MASS	Sunday, February 4, 2018 8:00 AM MASS	Sunday, February 4, 2018 10:00AM MASS	Sunday, February 4, 2018 12:00 NOON MASS
M. Drechsler	A. Mondrone	E. Dobres	G. Hoonhout
8th Grade Student	M. Riley	C. Rubano	L. Just

Getting Ready for Next Sunday

February 4th—5th Sunday in Ordinary Time—Cycle B

Scripture Readings ONLINE

The website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops provides the text of the Scripture Readings. Go to: www.usccb.org . Click on the date.

Reflections on Next Sunday's Celebration

Job 7:1-4,6-7

Psalm 147

1 Corinthians 9:16-19,22-23

Mark 1:29-39

Today's readings show us that people are not defined by their vocation or by their financial success or by their power. People are defined by their willingness to reach out to others. These are the "real" people who put aside preoccupation with self and set out to repair a hurting world.

Paul considers the question of financial aid in preaching the gospel. He is rebutting some Corinthians who maintain that nonacceptance of compensation implied denial of apostleship. In reply, Paul observes that he has no choice but to preach the Good News. God commissioned him to undertake the task. Financial independence enables Paul to be of service without pressure and to identify with the weak. To become all things for all people is another way of saying that service makes the person.

For Mark, Jesus' teaching in the synagogue provides a picture of a typical day in the Lord's early ministry. There is the exorcism of the man with an unclean spirit, the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, and the evening cures. Miracles manifest the advent of the kingdom; through Jesus, God is providing for those who hurt. Jesus' mission is not to show power or to satisfy curiosity, his call is to serve.

Service is a concern of the modern Christian family. Husband and wife support each other. Parents take responsibility as first teachers of their children. Children must respond to family obligations. Service is a concern of the extended family as well. Parishioners, citizens, elected officials, and nations must provide an environment where peace and justice grow and prosper.

- John Craghan, Th.D., S.S.L.

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For reflection...

This gospel has Jesus healing, praying, and preaching. As a disciple of Jesus, in what ways do you heal, pray and preach as he did?

Jesus didn't shy away from pain in the world. How do you deal with suffering in your life? in our world?

Have you ever felt like Job? Give some reasons why you think God allows suffering. Why do you think God chose a suffering Messiah to redeem us?

In the second reading, Paul says he does all for the sake of the gospel. What drove Paul to the point that he would do anything for the sake of the gospel? What passion drives you to do the things that you do?



OVERCOMING THE DIVISIONS THAT DIVIDE US

We live in a world of deep divisions. Everywhere we see polarization, people bitterly divided from each other by ideology, politics, economic theory, moral beliefs, and theology. We tend to use over-simplistic categories within which to understand these divisions: the left and the right opposing each other, liberals and conservatives at odds, pro-life vying with pro-choice.

Virtually every social and moral issue is a war-zone: the status of women, climate change, gender roles, sexuality, marriage and family as institutions, the role of government, how the LGBTQ community is to be understood, among other issues. And our churches aren't exempt; too often we cannot agree on anything. Civility has disappeared from public discourse even within our churches where there is now as much division and hostility within each denomination as there is between them. More and more, we cannot discuss openly any sensitive matter, even within our own families. Instead we discuss politics, religion, and values only within our own ideological circles; and there, rather than challenging each other, we mostly end up feeding each other in our biases and indignations thus becoming even more intolerant, bitter, and judgmental.

Scripture calls this enmity, hatred, and indeed that's its proper name. We are becoming hate-filled people who both fuel and justify our hatred on religious and moral grounds. We need only to watch the news on any night to see this. How's this to be overcome?

At the more macro level in politics and religion, it's hard to see how these bitter divides will ever be bridged, especially when so much of our public discourse is feeding and widening the division. What's needed is nothing short of religious conversion, a religious change of heart, and that's contingent on the individual. The collective heart will change only when individual hearts first do. We help save the sanity of the world by first safeguarding our own sanity, but that's no easy task.

It's not as simple as everyone simply agreeing to think nicer thoughts. Nor, it seems, will we find much common ground in our public dialogues. The dialogue that's needed isn't easily come by; certainly we haven't come by it yet. Many groups are trying for it, but without much success. Generally what happens is that the even most-well intended dialogue quickly degenerates into an attempt to by each side to score its own ideological points rather than in genuinely trying to understand each other. Where does that leave us?

The real answer, I believe, lies in an understanding of how the cross and death of Jesus brings about reconciliation. The author of the Letter to the Ephesians tells us that Jesus broke down the barrier of hostility that existed between communities by creating one person where formerly there had been two – and he did it this “by reconciling both [sides] in one body through his cross, which put that enmity to death.” (Ephesians 2, 16)

How does the cross of Christ put enmity to death? Not through some kind of magic. Jesus didn't break down the divisions between us by mystically paying off some debt for our sins through his suffering, as if God needed to be appeased by blood to forgive us and open the gates of heaven. That image is simply the metaphor behind our icons and language about being washed clean of sin and saved by the blood of Christ. What happened in the cross and death of Jesus is something that asks for our imitation not simply our admiration. What happened in the cross and death of Jesus is an example for us to imitate. What are we to imitate?

What Jesus did in his passion and death was to transform bitterness and division rather than to retransmit them and give them back in kind. In the love which he showed in his passion and death Jesus did this: He took in hatred, held it inside himself, transformed it, and gave back love. He took in bitterness, held it, transformed it, and gave back graciousness. He took in curses, held them, transformed them, and gave back blessing. He took in paranoia, held it, transformed it, and gave back big-heartedness. He took in murder, held it, transformed it, and gave back forgiveness. And he took in enmity, bitter division, held it, transformed it, and through that revealed to us the deep secret for forming community, namely, we need to take away the hatred that divides us by absorbing and holding it within ourselves and thereby transforming it. Like a water purifier which holds within itself the toxins and the poisons and gives back only pure water, we must hold within ourselves the toxins that poison community and give back only graciousness and openness to everyone. That's the only key to overcome division.

We live in bitterly divisive times, paralyzed in terms of meeting amicably on virtually every sensitive issue of politics, economics, morality, and religion. That stalemate will remain until one by one, we each transform rather than enflame and retransmit the hatred that divides us.