

Our Lady of Good Hope Roman Catholic Church

P. O. Box 159, 671 Water Ave., Hope, BC V0X 1L0
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Father Gordon A. Cook, OMI

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time – February 23, 2020

Weekday Masses

Tuesday to Saturday 9:00 AM

Sunday Masses

Saturday – 4:30 PM (anticipated Mass)
Sunday – 9:00 AM

Confessions

Weekdays Tuesday to Saturday – 8:30 AM to 8:45 AM
Saturday - 3:30 PM to 4:00 PM
Always available upon request.

Please pray for all our parishioners who are ill, at home, or in the hospital, in particular:

May Our Lord sustain, comfort and heal them through their faith.

Marilyn McKay, Galdino Berti, Yunha Kim, Dolores Azevedo, David De Beer, Brian Sparkes, Maxwell Paller, Art Pottie

Last Sunday Offering

\$ Envelopes Number of envelopes:
\$ Loose
\$ Weekly Anticipated Expenses

Thank you for your generous support of your Parish.

Reflection on Sunday's Gospel – Forgiveness

In Matthew's Gospel today, Jesus says, "*Love your enemies ... do good to those who hate you . . . Bless those who curse you . . .*" (Matthew 5:36-48). To say that we should love our enemies and do good to those who hate us has always been the most difficult part of the Gospel message. We can love our neighbour. We can love the disadvantaged. But to love and forgive our enemy, the one who has intentionally harmed us, is very difficult to do.

Immaculee Libagiza was born in a small village in Rwanda, Africa. In 1994, when she was home on spring break, the Hutu President of Rwanda was assassinated, and the country was swept by reprisals against the Tutsi's, her tribe.

Hutu men went from house to house, slaughtering every Tutsi they found. Immaculee fled to the local pastor's house, and to avoid being murdered, she had to hide in a 3 X 4-foot bathroom for 91 days with seven other women.

As she endured this, she also felt anger and resentment destroying her and started praying the Rosary: "I said the Lord's Prayer hundreds of times, hoping to forgive the killers who were murdering all around me. It was no use. Every time I got to the part asking God to "forgive those who trespass against us," my mouth went dry. I couldn't say the words because I didn't truly embrace the feeling behind them."

My inability to forgive cause me even greater pain than the anguish I felt in being separated from my family, and it was worse than the physical torment of being constantly hunted. When she finally left that bathroom, she learned that all her family, with the exception of one brother studying abroad, had been murdered. A million people had been massacred.

After the genocide, she was led to the man, now in prison, who had murdered her mother and brother. He had been one of her neighbors, and the prison staff was prepared to kill him on

her behalf, When she'd been in that bathroom, she had imagined killing the Hutus who had done so much evil. Despite all she had suffered, she simply said, **"I forgive you,"** and walked away. Through her prayer, she had triumphed over her anger and resentment found God and peace.

In every Mass we hear the ringing words of Christ *"This is the Cup of My Blood . . . It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven."* Receiving Christ in Holy Communion, partaking of His Blood shed for the sake of forgiveness, gives us the strength we need to be a people of forgiveness and reconciliation, and not of hatred and vindictiveness. We can and must be like Christ Himself.

Preparing for Ash Wednesday

Before we get to **Ash Wednesday on February 26** we should start asking ourselves some questions and we should start with some preparations" What am I going to be doing to prepare for Ash Wednesday?" Too often, Ash Wednesday is like every other day, except that I manage to get to church and get ashes on my forehead. Is there anything else I can do on Ash Wednesday?

Ash Wednesday is a day of fasting and abstinence from meat. How will fasting and abstaining from meat will spiritually prepare me on that special day? We can do an examination of conscience of our sins to prepare for this special day. We wear ashes on our foreheads to remember who we are and express our desire *to turn away from sin and to be faithful to the Gospel.*

Come and Pray the Stations of the Cross every Friday during Lent after the 9:00 AM Mass

The most important reason for reviving the practice of making the Stations of the Cross is that it is a powerful way to contemplate, and enter into, the mystery of Jesus' gift of Himself to us. It takes the reflection on the Passion of Christ out of our head, and makes it an imaginative exercise. It involves our senses, our experience and our emotions. To the extent we come to experience the love of Jesus **for us**, to that extent the gratitude we feel will be deep. Deep gratitude leads to real generosity and a desire to love as we have been loved.

Come, says Jesus, and walk with Me on My final hours on earth.

Why is Lent Forty Days?

Lent began on **Ash Wednesday February 26** which is actually forty-six days before Easter. We say that Lent is forty days in number because the six Sundays are excluded from Lent in order for the faithful to have time to pause and rejuvenate, gathering new strength. Since the restructuring of the Liturgical Year after Vatican II, the Easter Triduum, which begins on Holy Thursday, is not included in the Lenten season, so the actual days of Lenten observance are forty days.

In the New Testament we find Our Lord fasting and praying for forty days in the desert in preparation for His public ministry that would end in His redeeming death (Luke 5:35). He is the new Adam who overcomes the temptations of the devil and remains faithful to God; the new Israel, who reveals Himself as God's Servant by His total obedience to the divine will, in contrast to those who provoked God in the desert. The Church sets aside the forty days of Lent in order that we might imitate Our Lord by our fasting, prayer, self-denial and good works, and thereby prepare our hearts for an Easter renewal. "By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert" (Catholic Catechism, #540).

Boulders

Religious brother Carlo Caretto once had a dream that changed his life. He was living in the Sahara Desert and had chosen not to give an extra blanket to an elderly tribesman. That night, he dreamed that he was lying paralyzed under a huge rock. He could see the old man shivering in front of him and tried to give him the blanket, but he couldn't move. Awakening, he realized how far he still had to go in following Jesus.

Today, ask God to help you identify one of these boulders. Do it by imaging yourself as actually lying on the ground, pinned down by something. *What is it?* Perhaps it's fear or work or anxiety or hurt or health or perfectionism or the pain of a wounded relationship or sin. You may think this is just an exercise of imagination, but if the *"boulder"* you imagine makes sense to you and if you feel a sense of hope that you could be set free, then it could well be the Holy Spirit working through your imagination. So linger for a time, and see what comes to mind. *Name the boulder(s) that is paralyzing you.* Whatever it is, imagine Jesus lifting that boulder from you. Imagine that the weight is gone and that it is replaced with God's love and presence.