Memory and Hope

Following the practice begun by Pope Paul VI in 1967, on December 8’s Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Vatican released Pope Francis’s statement for the 53rd World Day of Peace on January 2020. His theme is Peace as a Journey of Hope: Dialogue, Reconciliation, and Ecological Conversion.

But what struck me most on reading Pope Francis’s brief statement is how much he spoke of memory. Memory is a powerful thing. On the one hand, it is the stuff of faded photographs and snatches of songs that call to mind old friends and treasured times we want to hold on to. There can be a tenderness and a bittersweetness to memory as it makes what we long for present to us again.

At the same time, memories can be painful, traumatically so. We might allow memories to recede or we may even bury them, because memory can conjure the deepest wounds in ways that inflict the same injuries over and over with each recall.

Pope Francis definitely does seem to have this latter aspect of memory in mind when he observes that “our human community bears in its memory and its flesh, the scars of ever more devastating wars.” He invokes the memory of victims, naming the Hibakusha, the survivors of the US nuclear strikes at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who bear witness to “unspeakable suffering” and “keep alive the flame of collective conscience.”

For Pope Francis, the dynamic and direction of memory does not only look backward. Yes, memory makes the past present, but Francis sees yet more power in memory. He speaks of the fruit of experience that is the basis for “present and future decisions to promote peace.” And he refers to memory as the horizon of hope—the exact opposite of looking backward. Horizons lie before us; they are the direction that we are headed. We can use the power of memory to create our future.

In the first two sections of his statement, Francis speaks of peace as the alternative war and the threat of war—which used to be often referred to with the apt acronym MAD, Mutually Assured Destruction. But what connects looking back in memory and forward in hope is made clear when Francis turns our attention to the wider requirements of peace: “there can be no true peace,” he says, “until we show ourselves capable of developing a more just economic system.” What’s striking is that this call is immediately preceded by Pope Francis recalling that Jesus told Peter that he must forgive a brother who sins against him “seventy times seven” (Mt 18: 21-22). Francis is positioning economic injustice as a sin, and the pursuit of a more just economy as a work of reconciliation.

—continued inside
In your prayers, please remember our sick and homebound brothers and sisters and our ministry at Pennsylvania Hospital.

Douglas Adler, George Bernato, Eleanor and Rick Bravo, Deborah Brooks, Ann Crowther, Jane Crowther, Mary Kay Crowther, Elizabeth Davies, Fr. Ed Dougherty SJ, Barbara Epting, Tessie Griffin, Carol Herman, Fr. Mike Hricko SJ, Imani Ivie, Sharon Krinsky, Bruce Maloney, Allen May, Giancarlo Mazzoleni, Fr. Jerry McAndrews SJ, D. Minter, Julius Mingroni, Bobby Morrissey, Barbara Paul, Tamara Lucia Sanchez Porta, David Roberts, Ray Scannapieco, Donovan Schmidt, Dennis Scott, Sara Smith, Ann Frances Tozzi, Mary Turner, Gail Williams, Sharon Winge and Patricia Yusko.

Announcements

January 1—Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God
There will be one Mass on January 1 at 12:05 PM. Confessions will not be heard that day; parish offices will be open from 11:00 AM–1:00 PM.

Parish Cookout Dinner, January 5
Join parishioners for a meal and fellowship following the Sunday 6:30 PM Mass on Sunday, January 5. Dinner will be prepared by members of the Young Adult Community and served in Barbelin Hall, below the church. Any help preparing the meal for any amount of time is much appreciated. If you might be interested in helping out for this cook-in, please email osjyac@gmail.com.

Intelligent Talk on Immigration: A Legal Perspective
Parishioner and attorney Thomas M. Griffin will shed light on the realities faced, from the border to the courtroom, by people seeking a safe home or to reunite their families here in the United States. Come learn about the legal challenges of migration in this era of aggressive enforcement and political polarization on Sunday, January 12, at 1:15 PM in Barbelin Hall.
In a similar way, in the next section of the statement Pope Francis draws on both his encyclical letter *Laudato Si* and his experience of the recent Amazon Synod to call for ecological conversion: for peaceful relationships between the land and the communities that live and depend on them, and peaceful relationships “between past and present, between experience and hope.” Reconciliation and conversion are what connect memory and hope. It is a dynamic connection, one that requires continued practice: Francis ends this statement by calling Catholics to be sustained by the sacrament of reconciliation and to what it requires of us: “to set aside every act of violence in thought, word, and deed, whether against God or God’s creation.”

Underlying this entire statement is Pope Francis’s continued insistence that we must broaden our vision. We need to repent of all that threatens fragile and precious human life: all forms of modern warfare and preparation for it, economic injustice, and ecological devastation. We need to be reconciled with our neighbors and with all creation. We need to transform our hearts and our political will. When we examine our lives, we must consider ourselves in the context of the people and places to which we belong. It is significant that Pope Francis considers democracy a paradigm for “the patient effort to seek truth and justice,” because democracy aspires to both equality for each person and the dutiful participation of all. Pope Francis repeatedly urges us to look from the one to the many, to understand that our human dignity comes to life in human community and in God’s creation.

World Day of Peace may seem like one more occasion in an overcrowded liturgical season: after Christmas, there’s the Feast of the Holy Innocents, the Feast of the Holy Family, the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God, Epiphany, and the Baptism of the Lord, all before we return to Ordinary Time. Not only that, but as 2019 turns to 2020, the wider world is awash in memories of the year and decade past. But as Pope Francis points out: what—who—we, as Catholic Christians, remember most constantly, is Christ. We remember what God accomplished for us in Him; our worship makes it present once again and conforms our lives to that memory. It is this remembering that establishes our horizon and makes possible everything we do to live as God would have us.

On the eve of the third decade of the 21st century, Pope Francis’s statement for World Day of Peace challenges us to not look back to false memories of a better past that never existed. We are invited, once again, to let our remembrance of Christ’s coming in human history unleash the power of hope, turning us forward to the horizon of his reign.

—BJ Brown  
Pastoral Associate

*Front page image: Refugees: La Sagrada Familia by Kelly Latimore.*

The image was distributed by the Jesuit Refugee Service USA with the following prayer:

*The road we take leads toward the promise of security and stability for we flee not solely in fear,*  
*nor do we make this pilgrimage for the pursuit of untold riches.*  
*We do not seek to spread terror,*  
*for how dearly do we cling on to hope in knowing that goodness abounds*  
*wherever we shall land as a unit,*  
*but much more than a statistic or a painfully vetted file,*  
*rather, a family, peculiar and unusual like any other: united, courageous, holy.*

*Inspired by Matthew 2: 13-23*
The Sacrament of Anointing
The Sacrament of Anointing (the sacrament of the sick) is offered during the 12:05 PM Mass on the first Saturday of each month. Homebound or hospitalized persons wishing to receive the Sacrament of Anointing should call the parish office.

Sacrament of Matrimony
If you want to be married at Old St. Joseph’s, please visit our website, oldstjoseph.org and read the material under the heading Weddings. Please call the parish office at 215-923-1766 at least nine months before your desired wedding date.

Rite of Christian Initiation
If you are an adult wishing to be baptized, or to receive First Eucharist and Confirmation, or are a baptized non-Catholic seeking full communion with Catholic Church, please call the parish office or email rcia@oldstjoseph.org.

Mass of Christian Burial
To schedule a funeral or memorial Mass, ask your funeral director to call the parish office

Parish Pastoral Council  
(osjpc@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Finance Council  
Paul Shay, chair

Historic Preservation Corporation Board  
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ, president

Adult Education  
Rita O’Brien and Jeanmarie Zippo  
(adulted@oldstjoseph.org)

Eldership  
Pat Nelson (eldership@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Life  
Joe Casey (parishlife@oldstjoseph.org)

Ignatian Spirituality and Formation  
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Ushers  
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Children’s Liturgy of the Word  
Peggy Connolly (clow@oldstjoseph.org)