

February 21 2019

**“Our mission is to celebrate God’s transforming Love in Jesus, by following where Jesus’ Love is calling us to serve the community”**



## Ascension This Week

**Pray for the Victim  
— from Fr. Bill Baker**

On Sunday, February 24

- 8 am Said Eucharist
- 10 am Sung Eucharist
- 11:15 am Coffee Hour
- 2:30 pm Service at Lakeside Manor
- 6 pm AA meeting

### Inside this issue:

- “Pray for the Victim” Fr Bill’s message
- Lenten programs and how we will arrange our schedules while Fr Bill is serving two churches as Priest.
- Meetings and Events for the next few weeks
- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper announcement

As the story unfolded this week about how the actor Jussie Smollett seemingly lied about being attacked, having racist and homophobic slurs hurled at him, I thought about one thing: the real victims. I worry that his potential lies might impact the victims of hate crimes or other violence perpetrated against them for fear that they might not be believed. His one selfish act might impact the lives of so many who are the most vulnerable in our society. I also fear that some people will use his lying in order to silence victims in the future. Sometimes the things that people say can add further insult and hurt to those who are already hurting.

Many of you know that I worked in the field of domestic violence. I heard horrific stories of abuse and violence perpetrated against my clients from just about every walk of life. In light of the Jussie Smollett case, countless stories of those who were victimized and afraid to share their stories because they feared that no one would believe, flooded my mind.

I want to share one of those stories in this edition of our newsletter and also how what someone else said also impacted one victim. First, I need to mention that most domestic violence and sexual assault goes unreported in this country. I have read statistics that suggest that about 75% of sexual assaults and 70% of domestic violence goes unreported. I do not know the numbers for unreported biased attacks, but I could imagine them to be high as well.

Another important statistic relates to false allegations. Police precincts are the only agency that track false allegations. By police estimates only about 5-10% of all allegations reported are false. Considering the high incidents of not reporting and low incidence of false reporting, we do not have an epidemic of false reports. However, I still fear that some will use this recent incident to suggest that victims lie and shouldn’t be heard.

The story I want to share with you is about a woman named Abby. Abby left her parent’s house because they were strict Christians and her father controlled her mother and Abby. Abby longed to get away from her controlling parents, so when she was 17 years old she dropped out of school and ran away to marry her husband, who was the pastor of a large evangelical church in Brooklyn and was twice her age. She knew her husband 2 months before she married him and moved in with him.

*(Continued next page)*

At first he seemed a little controlling, but soon his control went well beyond her parents. He gave her little money to buy anything and demanded to check out her body and clothes any-time she returned from outside to assure she wasn't cheating on him. Something she would later find out he was doing when she got an infection. Soon after they got married Abby got pregnant and the beatings started. Pregnancy is often the most dangerous time for a woman in an abusive relationship.

Abby's husband beat her off and on for the 4 ½ years they were married. He beat her when she was pregnant. He beat her when he drank. He beat her when she did something he did not like or whenever he suspected that she was cheating. But because Abby's husband was a well-liked pastor of a church, she feared that no one would believe her. This belief came from her husband telling her that if she ever told anyone he would say something like, "Who are they going to believe a woman without her high school diploma or a pastor with a Master's Degree in Theology." Abby stayed silent and never reported anything to anyone, let alone to the police.

Finally, she decided to leave. When I met her she lived in a shelter in Harlem and was working on raising her two small children and putting her own life back together. As part of the process Abby needed to find housing for herself and her children and she was required to attend court dates since her husband had filed for custody of their children. Finding housing can be difficult in New York City even if you have a decent income, but add to it that you are victim of domestic violence with little income who cannot return to Brooklyn because that is where your batterer lives and it becomes that much more difficult. There are some programs to assist with housing like Section 8, but they require that a person have at least 2 police reports to establish a pattern of domestic violence.

One day, I went with Abby to a family court date, and her attorney, who specialized in working with domestic violence, said that she feared the judge might not look favorably on her for not having at least two police reports so that she could apply for Section 8 housing and get out of the shelter. A bit of information which seemed to be a throw-away statement hit Abby hard. She was struggling to find housing and now because she did not have two police reports to get out of the shelter a judge might give her children back to her abusive husband.

For the next few months Abby seemed to fall into a depression. Every time I met with her to plan for leaving the shelter, she would mention her anxiety about not finding a place and the judge giving her kids to her husband. What added to her anxiety was that because she feared no one would believe her, she never reported the abuse to the police. It weighed heavily on her.

I do not know how Abby's story ended. She was transferred to a longer-term shelter and I hope she had new workers to help her find housing and deal with her anxiety. I often think about my many clients who refused to tell their story for fear of not being believed. Some were married to teachers or clergy, but others just feared that because they were uneducated or Black or women that no one would believe them.

That is why Jussie Smollett's actions bother me so much. Victims fear reporting because of retribution from batterers, that no one will believe them and also what others like judges, the police and their families will think of them for "allowing" themselves to be abused. Being the victim of any abuse or crime is a serious and complicated matter. In Abby's case she also felt scared by her lawyer's comments about losing her children. We need to be careful about what we say about those who have suffered any abuse.

I pray that Jussie will get the help that he needs and I pray for victims of any hurt, abuse or discrimination. Please be careful what you say about believing victims in the future. False reporting is rare and they have suffered enough. We, as Christians, certainly do not want to add to their pain.

**“Brother, Give Us A Word.”** Every day, on the SSJE website, one of the brothers gives a word that we might use as a focus in our prayer and meditation. **“Eucharist”**. *“Every piece of bread and sip of wine is precisely the same one: there is one bread, and that is Christ. We receive all of Christ in communion, not just a piece of him. If we break the loaf into a thousand pieces, there’s still only one Christ—and each of us receives all of him.”*

. ”.— *Br. Mark Brown, [SSJE](#)* You can see his full page of comments on this word on [SSJE.org](#).

### ***Where is Fr Bill??***

**Ash Wednesday, March 6:** Fr Bill will conduct services at St. John’s at 8:00am. At 9:30am he will conduct an Ash Wednesday service at Ascension. Then at 7:00pm we will have a joint service of both churches at St. John’s for anyone who could not make it to either of the morning services.

Fr Bill will work out of the office at St. John’s all day on Mondays and half days on Wednesdays after mass and coffee hour at Ascension.

Fr Bill will work at Ascension on Tuesday and Thursday full days and half days on Wednesday mornings.

In addition, Fr Bill has been asked to rotate weeks at Ascension and St. John’s during Lent. This rotation will continue until Palm Sunday. Fr Bill will be at Ascension for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. The week after Easter, he will be on vacation.

### ***Lenten Study Program this year – from Fr Bill’s article in last week’s newsletter:***

“For our Adult Forum/Lenten Series during Lent we will use a program called “Following the Way of Jesus” published by the Episcopal Church. My seminary classmate wrote the curriculum and I participated on the committee for the IPC that chose to use this for all the Episcopal Churches on Staten Island this year. Ascension will have two chances to participate each week—on Thursday evenings beginning March 7 at 7:00pm in the Rectory and on Sunday mornings after Coffee Hour beginning March 10.

On Thursday evenings, Cindy McCloskey and I will offer a lite supper of homemade soup and bread, as part of the Lenten Series. Since I will only be at Ascension every other week, I am looking for one or two people to be co-leaders of the Sunday morning group. I will assist in all the planning and participate in the Lenten Series when I am at Ascension. If you are interested, please let me know soon.”



**When:** Please join us on Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm for a delicious Pancake Supper served with sausages, fruit and coffee!

**Where:** Church of the Ascension, 1 Kingsley Avenue, Staten Island, 10314

Free will donation - Please see Roy Williamson if you expect to attend, or call the office at 718-442-4187 no later than March 4th!

**Save the Date: Upcoming Events for Richmond Episcopal Ministry:**

**Saturday, February 23:** Voyces presents Madri Gala 2019. Christ Church, 7PM. Tickets \$50. Includes wine and seltzer bar, cheese. Pay at the door or make a reservation at [info@voycesSI.org](mailto:info@voycesSI.org) or 718-873-6458. Check the Voyces website for more information.

**Sunday, February 24:** Installation of 2019 Vestry members and St Martha's Guild officers at Ascension will take place during the 10am service. After the service we will go to the Hilton for Brunch. Price is \$34.95 which includes a drink. If you will join us let Barbara Krause know. All Parishioners are welcome to join us. Reserve your seat.

**Tuesday, March 5:** Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper at Ascension. *See details above.*

**\*Thursday, March 7:** Adult Forum/Lenten study begins on at Ascension, 7pm in the rectory. A light supper will be served. Meetings continue through Lent.

**Saturday, March 9:** St John's will hold a St Patrick's Day dinner fundraiser. Time is 6:30PM, tickets are \$30.00. Event includes a DJ, 50/50 drawing, and basket raffles.

**\*Sunday, March 10:** Adult Forum/Lenten study begins after coffee hour. Meetings continue through Lent.

**Sunday, March 31:** Annual IPC Joint Lenten Service at 4PM. Location TBA.

\*You can choose one or attend both. *See information on preceding page.*

