

# Revive Mission at Bronx Parish Provides Lenten Respite

By **CHRISTIE L. CHICOINE**

**T**urn to the Lord in the midst of temptation, not after that temptation has passed.

So suggested Father Lucian Clark, C.P., a priest of the Immaculate Conception Monastery in Jamaica, Queens, who led the parish mission Revive March 20-22 at SS. Philip and James parish in the Bronx.

“The hardest time to turn to the Lord is when we feel weak and unworthy, when we’re disappointed in ourselves and we think that God is disappointed in us,” he said in his reflection.

But it is precisely then, he said, that people should say, “Here it is, Lord. Take it. It’s yours.”

“There’s a mystery of God there that will touch you,” Father Clark continued.

“We’re really invited tonight to reflect upon God’s purpose for us,” he said, then cited the Scripture passage that had been read before his reflection, Ephesians 1:1-14.

“Take it in, digest it, listen to it, let it roll over you, but then remember Jesus and the crowd that you face from day to day,” the crowd outside oneself and the crowd inside oneself.

An invitation was extended to other parishes in its cluster to attend the mission: Immaculate Conception on Gun Hill Road, St. Frances of Rome, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Anthony and Our Lady of Grace, and St. John Nam, all of the Bronx.

It is among a number of clusters of parishes across the archdiocese that have gathered for three-day “Revive: Faith Every Day” missions.

The gatherings include prayer and preaching and the celebration of Mass, as well as opportunities for the sacraments of reconciliation and anointing of the sick.

An outgrowth of the Making All Things New pastoral planning initiative, Revive is a two-year program that will enable each parish in the archdiocese

to participate in two such missions.

As its name implies, the goal is for a revival in the faith lives of individual Catholics, parishes and the community of the archdiocese. The archdiocesan Office of Adult Faith Formation is coordinating Revive.

The second evening of Revive at SS. Philip and James, which CNY attended March 21, began with Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, led by the pastor, Father Steven Masinde, A.J. “I wish you a very fruitful moment with the Lord, both in his word and as a community discovering God in one another,” he said in opening remarks.

Ohanuma Akalonu, 74, a native of Nigeria and parishioner of SS. Philip and James, offered the lay witness reflection. She gave a heartfelt talk about keeping her faith after she was diagnosed with cancer, which is in remission.

Among a number of youths present for Revive at SS. Philip and James Church was Ms. Akalonu’s granddaughter, Chelsea Akalonu, a freshman at Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx and a 2016 alumna of SS. Philip and James School.

“As a youth, you want to get closer to God,” said 14-year-old Chelsea, a member of the parish’s youth group.

Chelsea said that Revive is helping her prepare for Easter because it teaches “what God has sacrificed for me.”

“Me being here is also making a sacrifice for God because I could be doing something else, but I’m here to actually praise God and worship God. I understand that God died for me, and he’s very important to me.

“When you’re closer to God, you feel that you will be with him forever.

“I do remember where I came from,” Chelsea added. “I did grow up in this church, and this church has brought me closer to God.” It has also taught her many things, she said, including “how to stay on track. There are many people in this church



PHOTOS BY MARIA R. BASTONE

## COMMUNITY—

Choir members, above, raise their voices in song at the Revive mission March 21 at SS. Philip and James parish, the Bronx. Left, Father Lucian Clark, C.P., a Passionist priest of Jamaica, Queens, leads the mission.

who have taught me. I’m always here. This is like my family.”

Olga Blake, 69, a member of the Making All Things New team for Cluster 32, invited to the mission a parishioner who had a foot ailment. “I said, ‘Just make the first step.’ The next thing I knew, she was here.”

Ms. Blake, who also sings in the parish choir, enjoyed the collaboration of other choir members from the cluster during the mission.

Harold Campous, 59, who is employed as a maintenance worker, said he likely would have been cooking or watching sports on TV if he had not come to Revive.

He was happy he came. “It was a very peaceful atmosphere,” calm and prayerful, said Campous, who is an usher at the parish. He said he learned a lot from Ms. Akalonu’s personal testimonial. “She was a faithful lady.”

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