



Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
627 East 187th Street
Bronx, New York 10458
718.295.3770

January 14, 2018

I wanted to update you on our parish's continued outreach to the families affected by the fire on Prospect Ave of December 28th.

More important than any of the material and financial help is the spiritual accompaniment we have tried to offer. We began with the multi-faith prayer service for all of the families last Tuesday evening. Since then we have officiated funerals or memorial services for seven of the deceased. On Saturday evening, January 13th, we will host a prayer vigil in our church for the six Ghanaian victims. We are especially blessed to have our own Fr. Israel, a Ghanaian himself, to provide them comfort. Later next week we will also host the funeral mass for Emanuel Mensah, the Army private, who heroically saved several people in the building before losing his own life.

On the material side of things, I am so grateful to all of you who have donated whatever you could to help these families. First was the clothing and then the financial support. We have raised over \$200,000 for the twenty-seven families who have been displaced. With the goal of transparency and efficiency, we have formed a small committee of neighborhood leaders, with supervision and guidance from Catholic Charities, to make sure the money goes directly to families most in need, based on professional case management assessments. There will be no overhead or administrative costs. Every penny will go to these wonderful, hardworking people in their moment of need as a tangible sign of our love for them. Congratulations for showing the world that most people are very good when given a chance to do something special.

One of our parishioners gave me an amazing example of this goodness and generosity. He came up to me after mass with an envelope in hand. Handing me the envelope, he said, "I have decided not to go on vacation this year because I want to use the money I had saved for that purpose to help these families." Wow. We all remember the song, "They will know we are Christians by our love".

God bless,

Fr. Jonathan