

Do Not Let Yourselves Be Robbed of Hope!

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In a meeting with young people – and not so young people – on the first Palm Sunday after his election, Pope Francis stated, “We accompany, we follow Jesus, but above all we know that he accompanies us and carries us on his shoulders. This is our joy, this is the hope that we must bring to this world. Please do not let yourselves be robbed of hope, do not let hope be stolen, the hope that Jesus gives us.” In this same meeting, Pope Francis also cited his predecessor’s encyclical *Spe Salvi*, a work he frequently references. So what is this hope that is the focus of the following articles, and that is a thread running through recent papal addresses and documents?

The virtue of hope is of special relevance to Christianity, and humanity needs to be reminded of its value. It is a life-giving dynamic for living a full Christian life and a vital resource for the life of the Church and the world. It is not just that hope is a good virtue for which to strive; it is a necessity for human salvation.

Why Do We Hope?

Throughout the whole of *Spe Salvi* the question arises always new and always current: Why do we hope? The image of the journey of hope towards our goal of Trinitarian life synthesizes and crystallizes the integral vision of Christian hope that Pope Benedict offers us, because hope and salvation are inseparable. *Spe Salvi* presents hope as a dynamic reality, in a personalized, comprehensible form, and in open and current dialogue with each person and our contemporary world.

Aware of our finitude and the power of evil and sin in the world which we are unable to overcome; hope is centered on the God who is able to vanquish sin because God personally entered into history in the person of Jesus Christ whose redemptive love takes away the sin of the world.

“Through faith in the existence of this power, hope for the world’s healing has emerged in history. It is, however, hope—not yet fulfillment; hope that gives us the courage to place ourselves on the side of the good even in seemingly hopeless situations, aware that, as far as the external course of history is concerned the power of sin will continue to be a terrible presence.”¹

Hope Embraces all Spheres

Perhaps the most original aspect of this encyclical is the fact that it demonstrates hope in its integrity, embracing all spheres. First, it addresses time, including the past, the present and the future, looking toward eternal life.

Then, it talks of the various ways in which one can come to hope: through prayer and particularly contemplative prayer. Through action, because all serious and right action of humanity is hope being enacted. Through suffering, and this is in no way to glorify suffering in a narcissistic form, but to emphasize that suffering forms part of every human existence. We can try to limit suffering, to fight against it. What we do with suffering can, by God’s grace, transform our experience and lead to creative interior growth both for ourselves and for others.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, (Saved in Hope) Encyclical Letter, November 30th 2007, no. 36.

Presentation of the Articles

The articles that follow also demonstrate hope in its integrity. Father Louis Riverin draws deeply from the tradition with reference to Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. He sees hope as both a theological virtue and one with infinite possibilities. Fr Louis also emphasizes the importance of desiring to hope and not only for ourselves but for others for whom we can be a source of hope.

Sister Lorraine d'Entremont shares insights from contemporary authors she has found hopeful particularly in the context of individual and communal discernment and planning for the future. Planning hope, imagining hope and the emerging future of hope are the keynotes of her piece.

In the light of the Benedictine tradition and the vow of stability, with reference to contemporary inspiration, Sister Patricia Brady gives a specific and very personal example of planning and imagining hope. She shares her own and her community's experience of moving toward Abbeyfield St. Benedict House, Nanaimo, B.C.

Father Michel Proulx provides for us an experience of being confronted by the demoralizing effects of a degenerative disease and the powerful effect of sharing the scriptures, which brought a real sense of hope to a brother. This way of accompanying another is exemplary of the kind of accompaniment that Pope Francis calls us to espouse.

A darker but no less important note is sounded by Father Antoine-Emmanuel who calls to our attention the prevalence of corruption and indifference in the world and within consecrated life. His hope is that we shall take up Christ's invitation into his redemptive work where we may, through God's mercy and the offering of our prayer and suffering, contribute to the health of the Church and the world.

Finally, Sister Gaétane Guillemette gives us a contemporary psalm as she writes of an experience of darkness, when God seems absent. She speaks of a hope that can exist in suffering. The hope inspired by a loving and faithful God – a redemptive hope – of which we should never let ourselves be robbed!

The questions that accompany each article are meant to assist ongoing reflection. Enjoy Reading!