

“The Hope That Does Not Disappoint - Staying Positive & Faithful During Difficult Times”

“The Hope That Does Not Disappoint”

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

John 15:11–12

NABRE

Advent Retreat

Fr. James Northrop

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The Hope To Which We Are Called

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access [by faith] to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, 4 and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us. 6 For Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly. 7 Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. 8 But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. 9 How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath. 10 Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 11 Not only that, but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

(Romans 5:1–11)

The Object Of Our Hope

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

Catechism of the Catholic Church #1

The Joy of Our Own Conversion

(Message for Lent 2010)

The Evangelist Mark reports the following words of Jesus, which are inserted within the debate at that time regarding what is pure and impure: “There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him ... What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts” (Mk 7, 14-15, 20-21). Beyond the immediate question concerning food, we can detect in the reaction of the Pharisees a permanent temptation within man: to situate the origin of evil in an exterior cause. Many modern ideologies deep down have this presupposition: since injustice comes “from outside,” in order for justice to reign, it is sufficient to remove the exterior causes that prevent it being achieved. This way of thinking – Jesus warns – is ingenuous and shortsighted. Injustice, the fruit of evil, does not have exclusively external roots; its origin lies in the human heart, where the seeds are found of a mysterious cooperation with evil. With bitterness the Psalmist recognises this: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps 51,7). Indeed, man is weakened by an intense influence, which

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wounds his capacity to enter into communion with the other. By nature, he is open to sharing freely, but he finds in his being a strange force of gravity that makes him turn in and affirm himself above and against others: this is egoism, the result of original sin. Adam and Eve, seduced by Satan's lie, snatching the mysterious fruit against the divine command, replaced the logic of trusting in Love with that of suspicion and competition; the logic of receiving and trustfully expecting from the Other with anxiously seizing and doing on one's own (cf. Gn 3, 1-6), experiencing, as a consequence, a sense of disquiet and uncertainty. How can man free himself from this selfish influence and open himself to love?

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The Christian Good News responds positively to man's thirst for justice, as Saint Paul affirms in the Letter to the Romans: "But now the justice of God has been manifested apart from law ... the justice of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith" (3, 21-25). What then is the justice of Christ? Above all, it is the justice that comes from grace, where it is not man who makes amends, heals himself and others. The fact that "expiation" flows from the "blood" of Christ signifies that it is not man's sacrifices that free him from the weight of his faults, but the loving act of God who opens Himself in the extreme, even to the point of bearing in Himself the "curse" due to man so as to give in return the "blessing" due to God (cf. Gal 3, 13-14). But this raises an immediate objection: what kind of justice is this where the just man dies for the guilty and the guilty

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receives in return the blessing due to the just one? Would this not mean that each one receives the contrary of his “due”? In reality, here we discover divine justice, which is so profoundly different from its human counterpart. God has paid for us the price of the exchange in His Son, a price that is truly exorbitant. Before the justice of the Cross, man may rebel for this reveals how man is not a self-sufficient being, but in need of Another in order to realize himself fully.

Conversion to Christ, believing in the Gospel, ultimately means this: to exit the illusion of self-sufficiency in order to discover and accept one’s own need – the need of others and God, the need of His forgiveness and His friendship. So we understand how faith is altogether different from a natural, good-feeling, obvious fact: humility is required to accept that I need Another to free me from “what is mine,” to give me gratuitously “what is His.” This happens especially in the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Thanks to Christ’s action, we may enter into the “greatest” justice, which is that of love (cf. Rm 13, 8-10), the justice that recognises itself in every case more a debtor than a creditor, because it has received more than could ever have been expected. Strengthened by this very experience, the Christian is moved to contribute to creating just societies, where all receive what is necessary to live according to the dignity proper to the human person and where justice is enlivened by love.

In Summary

- Hope is kindled when our focus is on loving God and loving people. We cannot be truly happy, focused, and positive apart from God and His plan for our lives.
- The temptation in the garden was to compete with God and to violate the relationship between the Creator and the creature. This is the battle and story of human history.
- Human dignity is trampled upon when people don't believe they will render an account to God for their actions.
- Fear of the Lord (filial fear, not the kind from the Enemy) is the beginning of wisdom.

For Your Reflection

EPHESIANS 1:15–18

EPHESIANS

Therefore, I, too, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your love for all the holy ones, do not cease giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones,

“Never Have to Be Alone”

CeCe Winans

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