

FAITH AND REASON

The Virtue of Hope: The prophetic movement which has blossomed in the early days of Israel's Monarchy and borne such fruits as the unforgettable preaching of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, entered into a slow decline when Israel was exiled to Babylon in 600 B.C. It produced no great names after Ezekiel. Indeed, it barely survived the journey back to Palestine a century later. By the year 300 B.C. the prophetic movement was dead. However the message it preached was far from dead.

It is true in what the prophets have always held out, i.e., of God's final intervention to destroy the forces of evil and establish his kingdom on earth. It seemed less and less likely of finding fulfilment as the years dragged on, and how they dragged on.

There were those who - seeing Babylonian domination give way to Persian domination and Persian domination to Greek domination, and Greek domination to Roman domination - were willing to abandon the prophetic hope entirely and to resort to political means to restore Israel's independence. There were others who clung tenaciously to the prophetic promises that God would one day intervene. They were determined to reassert themselves in a more striking form, but each time it seemed to fail. The form it took was Apocalypse!

In the circumstances of social, political, religious viewpoints it was no longer realistic simply to repeat God's promises of final victory. It was necessary to back up that promise by recalling those numerous occasions on which God intervened to save his people. These events were taken out of the past and put into a dramatic and pretended future as these events were foretold long before they actually occurred. The lesson was obvious: the apparently hopeless future is under God's control just as the past was. The present, the past and the future as foreordained by God was the most powerful plea to the reader to project his management of the first half, which they were clearly aware of, into the second half yet to come. The message of the Apocalypse is clearly one of Hope.

We must, therefore, be a people of hope: "As long as there is life, there is hope" (Cicero) This is unquestionably true..... But how long can life survive without hope? Without hope, there is no future. The modern world is in dire need of hope: theological hope.

At the root of the crisis of hope lies the age-old challenge of faith and charity. The Old Testament elevates the drama of hope in a most dramatic way. Despite the hills, the valleys, the dreary plateaus, the prophets spoke insistently of hope. Ultimately this meant hope of righteousness before God. Knowing God, therefore, is the object of hope. In the Semitic idiom the word "know" means more than having knowledge of someone. To "know" God is to touch, they see him (c/f Isaiah 42:19) it involves the renewal of mind and heart (Ezekiel 36) the "Metanoia" spoken of by St John the Baptist. In the Old Testament, there is no evidence of any distinction between Faith, Hope, Love. St Paul refers to three virtues, but closely interwoven.

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) points to the heart of the matter. The Christian religion teaches man these two truths, both that there is a God of whom men are capable, and that there exists a corruption in their nature which makes them unworthy of Him. It is equally important for man to know both of these points: it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own wretchedness, and to know his own wretchedness without knowing the Redeemer who can heal him of it.

Knowledge of but a single one of these produces either the pride of the philosophers who have known God but not their own wretchedness, or the despair of the atheists who know their wretchedness without the Redeemer.

The hope of many people is, in the final analysis, a painful illusion. It is not a theological hope and it is not based on a relationship with Jesus. It is not based on faith and love, which such a relationship requires. It is centered on self and on the fulfillment of one's plans. One has only to think of the "Best laid plans of mice and men" (Shakespeare) to be reminded that the shifting sands of this dilemma cannot provide a basis for genuine hope... **A meditation by Fr. William C. Mooney**

I Needed the Quiet: I needed the quiet so He drew me aside, Into the shadows where we could confide. Away from the bustle where all the day long I hurried and worried when active and strong. I needed the quiet though at first I rebelled But gently, so gently, my cross He upheld And whispered so sweetly of spiritual things Though weakened in body, my spirit took wings To heights never dreamed of when active and gay. He loves me so greatly He drew me away. I needed the quiet. No prison my bed, But a beautiful valley of blessings instead – A place to grow richer in Jesus to hide. I needed the quiet, so He drew me aside... **Alice Hansche**

Mortenson

Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me a wonder at the wisdom and power of Your Father and ours. Receive my prayer as part of my service of the Lord who enlists me in God's own work for justice. Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me a hunger for peace: peace in the world, peace in my home, peace in myself. Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me a joy responsive to the Father's joy. I seek His will so I can serve with gladness, singing and love. Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me the joy and love and peace it is right to

bring to the manger of my Lord. Raise in me, too, sober reverence for the God who acted there, hearty gratitude for the life begun there, and spirited resolution to serve the Father and Son. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, whose advent I hail. **Amen.**

Advent: the season of hope: “Advent,” says Pope Francis, “is a journey toward the horizon of hope.” The hope of Advent, the pope says, “does not disappoint because it is founded on the Word of God. A hope that does not disappoint, simply because the Lord never disappoints! He is faithful!” As we began the holy season of Advent, and the Church’s new year, we began in the hope of the Lord. In many traditions, each of the candles of the Advent wreath represent a virtue, and an aspect of our preparation for Christ: hope, peace, joy, and love. We begin Advent, as we light the first candle of the holy season, by asking the Lord to enflame us with hope. The hope of Advent is not hope that Jesus will come back into the world at Christmas. Jesus did come into the world, two thousand years ago—God-made-man, Word made flesh, in Bethlehem. This is a historical fact. Hope is rooted in history, but hope is also about our present, and our future. Hope is the knowledge that our lives have meaning—that each day that we live matters, and indeed, that we matter, because we are beloved by God and because he has an eternal plan for our lives.

“To come to know God—the true God—means to receive hope,” Pope Benedict XVI taught in his encyclical *Spe salvi*. Hope is knowing the Lord, believing in his promises, and trusting that he loves us, transforms us, and sanctifies us. Hope gives us the truest “basis” for our existence, Pope Benedict taught, “a basis that abides, that no one can take away.” Hope gives us freedom to live for what really matters. “The one who has hope lives differently,” Pope Benedict wrote. “The one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life.” Through hope, we understand that our joys and consolations are a foretaste of what God promises us in heaven, and our sorrows and sufferings can be unified to Christ on the cross, for our salvation, and the salvation of the world. Through hope, we know that God’s love for us gives the deepest meaning and purpose to our existence—that how we live in this world can bring us into eternal happiness with God, no matter what happens to us. In hope, we know that this world is fleeting, and that real and lasting joy awaits in the Lord’s promise of our salvation... **Bishop James Conley**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday	I plead with you — never, ever give up on hope; never doubt, never tire and never become discouraged. Be not afraid.
Monday	Pray, hope and don’t worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer.
Tuesday	That fear is useful which is buoyed up by hope and is not weighed down by despair.
Wednesday	They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength...” — Isaiah 40:31
Thursday	We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.
Friday	We are saved by hope for that which we do not see and we wait for it with patience.
Saturday	For You are my hope; O Lord God, You are my confidence from my youth.” Psalm 71:5

An Advent Examination: Advent is the perfect time to clear and prepare the Way. Advent is a winter training camp for those who desire peace. By reflection and prayer, by reading and meditation, we can make our hearts a place where a blessing of peace would desire to abide and where the birth of the Prince of Peace might take place.

Daily we can make an Advent examination. Are there any feelings of discrimination toward race, sex, or religion? Is there a lingering resentment, an unforgiven injury living in our hearts? Do we look down upon others of lesser social standing or educational achievement? Are we generous with the gifts that have been given to us, seeing ourselves as their stewards and not their owners? Are we reverent of others, their ideas and needs, and of creation? These and other questions become Advent lights by which we may search the deep, dark corners of our heart.

It is Jesus in fact that you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal... **from St. John Paul II the Address on the 15th World Youth Day,**

Prayers for Lighting the Advent Wreath Candles

First Week: All-powerful God, increase our strength of will for doing good that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

In His Will is Our Peace

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