

Fr. Brad Neely

Sunday of the Lord's Passion, Cycle C / Sts Peter & Paul: March 28, 2010

[similar to Holy Trinity: Good Friday 2006]

Is 50: 4-7; Phil 2: 6-11; Lk 22: 14-56

Its profound to recall  
Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem,  
and how this moves to His rejection, suffering,  
and death—all in the course of a few days.  
For the apostles and disciples,  
the arrest of Jesus, his trial,  
his passion, and his death  
must have drained them of all **hope**.

But what **hope** *itself actually is*,  
changed on that Friday through Sunday  
in the year 33AD.

It changed because Jesus isn't just *any man*.  
Jesus wasn't just any man in the year 33AD,  
and isn't just ordinary man in the year 2010.

In recent national events,  
we might be questioning the status of our own **hope**.  
Holy week---a time of recollecting  
the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ  
comes at a poignant time.

So, it would be good to pause  
on the topic of **hope**.

The CCC defines **hope** as:

“The theological virtue by which  
we desire and expect from God  
both eternal life and the grace we need to attain it.”

In secular terms, **hope** is:

“the feeling that what is wanted can be had,  
or that events will turn out well;  
a person or thing in which expectations are centered.”  
(Webster's).

So, again, turning instead to the Catechism (1817):

“**Hope** is the theological virtue  
by which we desire the kingdom of heaven  
and eternal life as our happiness,  
placing our trust in Christ's promises  
and relying not on our own strength,  
but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.  
So, we desire eternal life in heaven,  
and trust the grace of Christ to that end.

But what is a theological virtue?

(CCC1812): “. . . theological virtues. . .  
adapt [our] [abilities]

*for participation in the divine nature. . .*”

They [prepare] Christians to live  
*in a relationship with the Holy Trinity*.

(CCC1813): “[The theological virtues]  
are *infused by God* into the souls of the faithful

to make them capable of *acting as his children*  
and of *meriting eternal life*.

They are the pledge of *the presence and action*  
*of the Holy Spirit*

in the [abilities] of the human being.

In other words,

God makes it possible for us to seek,  
and ultimately *be with* God.

There are three theological virtues:  
faith, **hope**, and charity.”

(CCC1818): “The virtue of **hope**. . .  
keeps [us] from discouragement;  
it sustains [us] during times of abandonment;  
it opens up [our] heart in expectation  
of eternal beatitude.

So many things in life can discourage us,  
and we need not only to be sustained,  
but to be divinely sustained.

(CCC1820): “**Hope** is the ‘sure and steadfast anchor  
of the soul . . . that enters. . . where Jesus has gone  
as a *forerunner* on our behalf.”

Here is a major, major factor to surround ourselves  
with during Holy Week.

Christ is a “forerunner on our behalf:”

a forerunner in victory---

a forerunner in rejection---

a forerunner suffering---

a forerunner in death---

a forerunner in resurrection---

a forerunner in glorious life after death.

Where can we ever go

that Christ has not already been?

What can we experience that the Son of God  
has not already experienced?

**Hope** affords us joy even under trial.

It is expressed and nourished in prayer.

(CCC1821): “in every circumstance,  
each one of us should **hope**,

with the grace of God,

to *persevere to the end*,

and to *obtain the joy of heaven*,

as God's eternal reward

for the good works accomplished  
with the grace of Christ.”

So, as we go about our daily lives,

**hope** grounds us in interaction with God.

It is not apart from God.

Donald DeMarco,

in his book Hope for a World Without Hope, says that: “We need something apart from our [own] accomplishments that we can live for, something that gives us direction and will redeem our struggle with meaning.” (DeMarco, 3).

We cannot have **hope** without God.

But as we place our **hope** in God, we find meaning---meaning in life itself.

DeMarco also states that:

“ . . . **hope**. . .has the qualities of realism, courage, patience, and the willingness to embrace difficulties.” (deMarco 4)

When we consider Holy week,

Jesus rode into Jerusalem understanding the realities that lay there in wait.

He displayed courage,

he demonstrated patience,

and he exhibited the willingness to embrace difficulties.

Keep in mind that---in all things, **Jesus is our forerunner**.

DeMarco goes on to mention that:

“Good **hope** rests on three firm foundations.

The first is *intellectual*

which allows us to see the reality of things and protects us from the snares of illusions, superstitions, and wishful thinking.

The second is *psychological*

and requires us to develop the patience we need in order to wait for the realization of our **hopes**.

The third is the *spiritual* and involves prayer.

Without prayer there can be no real hope, because God is the source of all our hope.

Prayer is the invitation of God’s intervention, and our willingness to submit to His decisions.”

(DeMarco 5)

[Otherwise, we are chasing after

“luck, or fate, or the consequences

of our own small efforts

that are. . .constrained by our limited imagination.”

(deMarco 5).

“**Hope** must always be larger than wish. . .” (deMarco 5).

It is the very presence of God in our lives.

**Our hope** always lies

in the use of our human freedom,

*no matter what happens,*

to be with God,

and respond to his showering of graces.