**PILGRIMS OF HOPE**

**REFLECTION SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT: HOPE**

**OPENING PRAYER**

Lord, in this Lenten journey, open our hearts to see beyond appearances and distractions. Teach us to embrace the deeper purpose of our actions and to live with true humility and love. Loving God, in times of despair, when the weight of wars and ecological disasters, tariffs and uncertainties tempt us to give up, remind us of the hope you plant within us. Help us to live with compassion and justice. Strengthen our hands to restore what is broken. May we be instruments of hope, bringing renewal to the world. Amen

**READINGS FOR REFLECTION**

**Pope Francis:** “After the flame of hope is kindled in us, there can be times when it risks being extinguished by the worries, fears and pressures of daily life. A flame needs oxygen to keep burning in order to grow into a great bonfire of hope. The gentle breeze of the Holy Spirit nurtures our hope and there are several ways that we cooperate in this... Hope is nurtured by prayer... Hope is nurtured by our daily decisions.”

**Pope Francis:** “Through our witness, may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it. May the way we live our lives say to them in so many words: ‘Hope in the Lord! Hold firm, take heart and hope in the Lord!’ May the power of hope fill our days, as we await with confidence the coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and glory, now and forever.”

**Psalm 27:** The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

The Lord is my life’s refuge, of whom should I be afraid?

When evildoers come at me to devour my flesh,

These my enemies and foes themselves stumble and fall.

Though an army encamp against me, my heart does not fear.

Though war be waged against me, even then do I trust.

One thing I ask of the you, Lord, this I seek: to dwell in your house

all the days of my life, to gaze on your beauty, to visit your temple.

For you will hide me in your shelter in time of trouble,

You will conceal me in the cover of your tent and set me high upon a rock.

Even now my head is held high above my enemies on every side!

I will offer in your tent sacrifices with shouts of joy.

I will sing and chant praise to you, my Lord.

Hear my voice when I call; have mercy on me and answer me.

You have said, “seek my face.” My heart says to you, “Your face I do seek.”

Do not hide your face from me; do not repel your servant in anger.

You are my salvation; do not cast me off; do not forsake me, God my savior!

Even if my father and mother forsake me, you will take me in.

Show me your way; lead me on a level path because of my enemies.

Do not abandon me to the desire of my foes,

malicious and lying witnesses have risen against me.

I believe I shall see your goodness in the land of the living.

Wait for the Lord, take courage; be stouthearted, wait for the Lord.

**Romans 5: 3 – 5** And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. If you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame.

**Hebrews 10.19-25** Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. What is the key message of hope in the above passages?
2. Where could that message of hope resonate in our world today?

**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUE OF HOPE**

Hope is rooted in God’s promise of love and protection: “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). Jeremiah, writing to the people in captivity, encourages the people to live, to be fully alive, and, while in captivity, to thrive – not simply survive. They are to live in such a way that, though in captivity, they can be witnesses to faith and hope. They were to live life without forgetting that they are God’s people, knowing that God will be with them.

Hope is trust in God’s promise. Knowing what God has done for us in the past and knowing that God floods our lives with spirit and love, we are assured of God’s assistance now and in the future. We rely not on our own strength but on the love of God as manifested by Jesus and in the gift of the Holy Spirit. God our Father has sent into the world the Word of truth and the Spirit to guide us. God is with us and supports us. God has done so in the past and will continue to do so.

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. This is hope: that we plant seeds of love and kindness though we may never see the fruit of our labour. That we love, forgive, seek peace and live the corporal works of mercy without expecting anything in return.

Hope is not some wishful thinking that all is going to be all right; hope “is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God’s love” (Spes Non Confundit, 3). If we wish to be prepared to give a reason for our hope, to be people who help make present the Kingdom of God, we need to commit ourselves to being part of the solution of “remedying the remote causes of injustice, settling unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry” (Spes Non Confundit, 16)

**Spes Non Confundit, Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025**

God’s word helps us find reasons for that hope. Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God’s love. We need to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence. The signs of the times, which include the yearning of human hearts in need of God’s saving presence, ought to become signs of hope.

**Pope Francis, General Audience – 8 May 2024**

We sin against hope when we become despondent over our sins, forgetting that God is merciful and greater than our heart. And let us not forget this, brothers and sisters: God forgives everything, God forgives always. We are the ones who tire of asking for forgiveness. But let us not forget this truth: God forgives everything, God always forgives. We sin against hope when we become despondent over our sins; we sin against hope when the autumn in us cancels out the spring; when God’s love ceases to be an eternal fire, and we do not have the courage to make decisions that commit us for a lifetime.

**LEARN MORE REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. Where in your life do you need this Christian virtue of hope?
2. Where in the world today do we need this Christian virtue of hope?

**CALL TO ACTION**

1. What actions and attitudes might I cultivate that would bring me closer to God’s love?