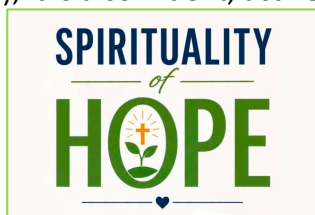


Spirituality of Hope

A Lord's Flock Worship Service Topic

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St. Paul taught us three theological virtues: Faith, Hope and Love (1 Cor. 19). The first two are easy: FAITH can be learned in school or from hearing masses. LOVE can be experienced by being part of a family/community. However, HOPE is difficult; it can be learned mostly after we have passed through darkness or trials. The good news is - we can learn to have hope without passing through grave circumstances so that HOPE becomes inherent in our disposition in life. Our faith is a living hope (1 Pet.1: 3); it is a confident, active trust in God.



Five practical tips so that hope will be part of our habits and skill set:

1. **Refocus our attention.** We frequently focus on the center, but there are many things happening in the peripheries (Rebecca Solnit, journalist).
 - 1.1. The good news of Jesus' birth was not given to the center of power; it was announced to the shepherds in the fields.
 - 1.2. Catholicism spread so fast because Jesus focused quietly on the simple people in the peripheries (Dr. Rodney Stark, historian).
 - 1.3. The tiny mustard seed is the source of the kingdom of God (Matt. 13:21-31).
 - 1.4. People say that life is difficult now. However, a statistician, Dr. Hans Roslyn proved that life is better (diseases have been eradicated; life expectancy has risen).
 - 1.5. Watching the bad/fake news on social media makes us think this is the reality. Shift the focus on the sacrifices of our parents, the people in society who do good.
2. **Appreciate the power of action/movement.**
 - 2.1. Vinichio Viva was a man with a genetic condition - with boils all over his body; thus, he lived a hidden life. However, when Pope Francis was ordained, Vinichio bravely went to St. Peter's square to meet Him. The Pope noticed him, embraced and kissed him. Because of this small act of kindness, the Pope brought him back to society.
 - 2.2. Our vocation is to move/act. The responsibility given to us by God is to be stewards of creation, take care of creation.
 - 2.3. During the pandemic, many were desperate and helpless. Then, Patricia Non started a community pantry outside her home. This simple concrete action was followed by

many. When we start to feel depressed, let us look at our hands and DO something.

- 2.4. Small acts of kindness done by Jesus inspire us and became sources of hope. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are for building up the church. Let us do works of mercy (Matt. 25:35).
3. **Embrace and build up communities.** We cannot survive if we do not belong in a family or a community. Community means "being together in all things" (Acts 2:42-47).
 - 3.1. Through Abraham, God formed Israel, the chosen people of God and built a covenanted community. In the New testament, Jesus called the 12 apostles to form the new tribes of Israel purposely to build a church.
 - 3.2. We are saved through the church. "Outside of the church, there is no salvation" (St. Augustine). In times of crisis, hope emerges from communities.
4. **Choose HOPE every day.** It is easy to give in to despair. Let us choose to be happy every day.
 - 4.1. Even as God is at work in our life, likewise the evil one is at work tempting us every day. Spiritual warfare is a reality. Let us discern, be protected with the armor of Christ, prayer, and community.
 - 4.2. Mary is our example, "My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior . . ." (Luke 1:46-49).
 - 4.3. "Nightbird" (during her cancer journey) said, "why wait for everything to be fine in your life to be happy?"
5. **Know the true God.** God is omnipotent, all powerful. God has perfect plan for us.
 - 5.1. God cannot be defeated by evil. He is omniscient (knows everything) and loving. If we know this, we will never lose hope. Yet, with a small problem, we think of crisis.
 - 5.2. Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:31-39). God revealed His love through Jesus Christ on the cross. In all our dealings, let us share this love.

CONCLUSION: Hope comes from true knowledge and love of God. Where hope emerges, there is nothing we cannot accomplish. Even with small things, we can show the love of God.

REFLECTION:

1. What is your image of God? How does this image strengthen your hope for the future.
2. What is your impact in this world? What talents, capabilities, strengths do you have and can offer to God. What else can you do?

SCRIBES Ministry

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