

Be joyful in hope

Rom 12:12

Monthly Reflection:

January 2021

St Paul's encouragement to the Romans is the Jesus Youth encouragement to the world in 2021. We are always to be JOYFUL IN HOPE. Why? Because Jesus reigns in us! When Jesus is truly living in our hearts then there is always youthful hope. We are always joyful! Even in the midst of a Covid-19 pandemic.

HOPE is one of our fundamental three theological virtues – faith, HOPE and love. This means that it is God's gift to us. It also requires our response.

Jesus makes our faith both gift and task – invitation and mission. The Hope of Christmas and the 2021 New Year keeps us from despair (no hope) and presumption (arrogant overconfidence in our own resources).

Pope Francis reminds us that the tragedy of the Covid -19 pandemic revives in us “the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together” (Fratelli Tutti, 32).

The renewed awareness that we are part of each other gives us the brilliant light of HOPE at the end of this terrible darkness of Covid-19. We repent at the start of 2021 that we have “camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our appearances” (Fratelli Tutti, 32).

One wonderful way of dismissing our selfishness and opting afresh for being “saved together” is starting with our families and prayer communities. May they always be places of **H.O.P.E.** That is, **Homes Of Prayer Encounter.** We are so often now confined to our homes in isolation. At least here, we ought to make them true homes of encounter with Jesus, Mary and Joseph and each person who lives in our home.

May this happen too with our prayer communities. Even if it can only be by on-line meetings! May we say to each other - **J.O.Y.** That is, **Jesus Over You.** “**Be JOYful in HOPE**”.

Pope Francis always encourages us to defeat the loneliness of Covid-19 with the closeness of Jesus.

We make Jesus close by being **Missionary Disciples of Hope**. It means bringing the closeness of Jesus to other in practical acts of love, mercy and joy.

St Paul wants us to be patient in the afflictions of our life. We are to pray faithfully always.

We are tired. Medical and hospital staff, schoolteachers, emergency workers, parents and so many others have exhausted themselves by offering so much hope to those in need.

Whole families studying and working from home has not been easy.

From the “monastic” feel at home, egotistical presumption is challenged.

The sick, aged and vulnerable appreciate the extra on-line Masses and prayers made available from dioceses and parishes and our communities.

The youth, as always, have shown leadership regarding on-line evangelisation.

The marginalised homebound delight in a phone call, or visit from people of joyful hope.

Grandparents delight to see their children and grandchildren at least on electronic communications.

The pandemic of loneliness and isolation is conquered by all these “little miracles” of practical closeness.

In 2021, we will continue to offer others the “new normal” of a kindly smile, joyful word and offer of help. They become the **VACCINE OF HOPE** the anxious world yearns for and truly finds a cause of great joy.

Over the centuries, Christians have knelt in awe before the Holy Family at the Bethlehem stable. They have done so in greater fervour in times of war, pestilence and catastrophe. We now do the same.

St Paul and all the Christian witnesses to the Death and Resurrection of Jesus know that in silent adoration before the Bethlehem child hope is fully realised.

Ultimately, all we really need to experience is that in our pain God is with us. He is our lasting hope. His name is, after all, EMMANUEL – GOD IS WITH US. Hope is a person: hope is Jesus!

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