

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

Life in Christ – Part 11: Hope – Do You Hope in God? I Hope So.

Over the last two weeks, we discussed the Theological Virtues of Love and Faith. We will now turn our focus to the third Theological Virtue: Hope.

You may remember in a previous column that the term Pride was confusing because it had multiple definitions. [cf. *Looking Through Stained Glass*, “Life in Christ – Part 2: Pride – Good For You?”, Feb 24, 2019] Like Pride, Hope has multiple definitions. However, unlike Pride, the two main definitions of Hope are both positive. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, hope means either “1. A feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen” or “2. A feeling of trust.” The first definition is how we use “hope” in common speech. For example, we might say, “I hope it doesn’t rain on our parade.” This is not the Theological Virtue of Hope. The second definition of hope begins to move toward the Catholic definition of Hope. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), “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.” [CCC, 1817] We can see from the above definition from the Catechism that Hope is not just a desire for something positive – in fact the ultimate positive thing, Heaven – but it is also trust that God will make this happen.

As we mentioned in the column on the Theological Virtue of Love, Love is the spring from which all the Virtues come. Because of God’s love for us, He wants us to be with Him in Heaven, and this is the source of our Hope. God gives us the grace of Hope, so that we might not only desire Heaven, or

even be optimistic about the possibility of Heaven, but God’s grace gives us trust that he wants Heaven for those who trust in Him.

We can also say that Faith helps us with the Virtue of Hope. Faith and Hope are interdependent. Our Faith in God gives us a reason for Hope and our Hope is lived out here on Earth through our Faith. In his encyclical *On Christian Hope* (or *Spe Salvi*), Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI expressed this reality as “Faith is the substance of Hope.” [*Spe Salvi*, 10]

As alluded to above, Hope is not just a Virtue for the afterlife. It is, as all virtues are, a grace of God that helps us live this life too. In Paul’s Letter to the Romans, he expresses it this way, “...We wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance.” In the encyclical mentioned above, Benedict takes this Scripture as his basis and begins, “Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey.” [*Spe Salvi*, 1] So, the Pope Emeritus is affirming that the Hope we are given from God’s grace, not only applies to Heaven, but can help us as we live in this world, especially when events of this world present us with challenges and trials. So, Hope helps us persevere.

Next week, we will begin our discussion of the Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance.

