

## **Pastor's Pen: Humility and Virtue Part 4**

Hope. What is hope? According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1817-1818)

*“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 the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.... The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration of happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire man’s activities and purifies them and orders them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to happiness that flows from charity.”*

Hope is the motivating force behind our goals in life. What our hope is will find itself exposed by our priorities and actions. It helps us set priorities and determine what is worthy of our time, energy, and resources. Hope is shown in where we place our true trust. It is telling that sins against the virtue of hope are handled under sins against the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandments (you have no other gods) in the Catechism.

### ***Who do you trust?***

Hope betrays where our hopes are. If hope is not developed by God, we will find our hopes oriented toward the things of this world. The world can be a cruel taskmaster. I remember as a young man hoping completely in the things of this world. I hoped in the security wealth, power, and pleasure could afford me. God had a nominal to non-existent role in my life. My time, energy, and resources were oriented to the pursuit of these things. Let’s be honest; they were my idols. They were the idols that kept me from taking faith seriously. They were the idols that blurred any ability to seek and discern God’s will. They were the idols everyone else was worshipping. There was great pressure to follow suit. However, upon realizing that the no matter how much of each I had, it would never be enough, I came to the conclusion I was throwing away my life on things that would never satisfy me. Misplaced hope leads to no other destination other than frustration.

Misplaced hope leads us to place relationships as secondary to the pursuit for things. It leads us to believe it is a matter of being pragmatic to chase the things of this world over anything to do with God. Misplaced hope can lead to despair, believing that it is too late to turn back, re-set priorities, and feel enslaved to the path which we have set. Misplaced hope can lead to presumption, a belief that God will simply be okay with having idols placed before Him, that He will just have to understand that my relationship with Him is secondary (if even that) to my pursuit of the honors of the world. A lack of hope essentially is not willing to believe that there is anything beyond this life and if there is, that our actions and priorities are disconnected to what happens beyond here. Hope provides clarity of vision and balance. Hope helps us to see the bigger picture. Hope helps us to orient our lives to something beyond this life.

## ***Hope and Humility***

Humility, being a life lived in the truth, is indispensable to the development of hope. Humility gives us that clarity of vision to know that there is more than what we see. Humility also shows us that what God has planned for us is far greater and more satisfying than what I want. Humility and hope allows me to take setbacks and injustices leveled against me in stride, knowing that my response to such things should not be willing to surrender eternal life. Humility and hope breeds patience, perseverance, and an indestructible joy. Why? Because meaning in life is no longer tied to worldly success. Meaning in life is no longer tied to worldly wealth, honor, and pleasure. Without humility and hope, we cannot do as Jesus tells us, "store up heavenly treasure, which neither moths nor rust corrode, nor thieves break in and steal." (Matthew 6:20)

Finally, hope and humility give us the ability to put things into perspective. If our hope is in the things of God, then whether my kid is a starter, whether I get a trophy or award, whether I am getting the title or promotion, and so on, as painful as they might be, don't rattle us or hoard our time and energy worrying about. Since hope is divinely nurtured, we must develop that relationship with God. Divorcing oneself from the sacramental life of the Church, especially so as to facilitate our worship of things we deem greater, only feeds the sense of frustration and hopelessness we feel while pursuing idols that have no real power. Certainly they have no eternal power.

God will not make you choose to place your hope in Him over other things. However, what we choose on earth is what we get for eternity. If these things, as good as they might be (money, wealth, pleasure, honor, work, sports, leisure) do not completely fulfill us now, what makes us think they can fulfill us for eternity? God wants better for us than eternal or even temporal futility. We should trust that what He wants for us, our spouse, our children, and our grandchildren is far greater than what we want and act accordingly.

