

## Homily Rerun: November 27, 2016 - Fr. Bill

### We Wait In Joyful Hope: “Throw off the Works of Darkness” (Fr. Bill)



In the aftermath of many months of depressing electioneering it is fitting to begin our new Year of Grace with the Advent theme: ‘We Wait in Joyful Hope.’ This is made doubly beneficial in the fact that we so seldom pray or think or speak or preach about the theological virtue of hope. Yet it is hope that opens the window of our souls to the light of joy which is generated by our faith and fully realized in charity.

#### I. What is hope?

Hope is looking to a future reality with such total confidence that I rejoice as though I possess it today because in and by faith I do possess it today. We can understand this in the 5 year old child living in Cleveland, OH. He hopes to go to Disney: he wants to go; he dreams about going; – this is a strong desire, not the Christian virtue of hope. Then, for Christmas, his parents promise him that they will go to Disney this summer. Now: he knows he is going; he is excited about going; he’ll drive his parents crazy with his questions of anticipation; he won’t even mind being in ‘time out’ as it gives him a chance to savor the trip to Disney – this is the Christian virtue of hope.

For the 5 year old, his hope rests on his faith in the promise of his parents. As adults we know that something beyond the parents control might happen to prevent the fulfillment of their promise. But for us, our hope rests on our faith in God. Nothing – NOTHING – can prevent God from fulfilling His promise.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us about hope. {numbers below are from the CCC}

#### **The Theological Virtues:**

# 1813 *“They (the three theological virtues) are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as His children and of meriting eternal life.”*

#### **Hope is confident expectation because it trusts in Christ and relies on the Holy Spirit:**

#1817 *“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.”*

#### **Hope purifies our desire for happiness providing encouragement and expectation:**

#1818 *“The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men’s activities and purifies them so as to order 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.”*

#### **Hope anchors the soul in the victory of the cross of Christ even in times of difficulty:**

#1820 *“Through the merits of Jesus Christ and of His Passion, God keeps us in the ‘hope that does not disappoint.’ (Rom 5:5) Hope is the ‘sure and steadfast anchor of the soul ...’ (Heb 6:19-20) ... It affords us joy even under trial: ... Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire.”*

#### **II. How Do We Wait in Joyful Hope?**

In today’s second reading (Romans) St Paul provides us with one answer “Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ... put on the Lord Jesus Christ,”

1<sup>st</sup> **“Throw off the works of darkness.”** Every sin is a work of darkness and must be rejected.

#### **Natural Law shows us the ‘works of darkness’:**

#1955 *“Where then are these rules written, if not in the book of that light we call the truth? In it is written every just law; from it the law passes into the heart of the man who does justice, ...”* (St. Augustine) *“The natural law is nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God; through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid. God has given this light or law at creation.”* (St. Thomas Aquinas)

#### **Revealed Law, starting in the Old Testament, provides us a shortcut to the natural law:**

#1962 *“The Old Law is the first stage of revealed Law. Its moral prescriptions are summed up in the Ten Commandments. The precepts of the Decalogue lay the foundations for the vocation of man fashioned in the image of God; they prohibit what is contrary to the love of God and neighbor and prescribe what is essential to it. The Decalogue is a light offered to the conscience of every man to make God’s call and ways known to him and to protect him against evil: ‘God wrote on the tables of the Law what men did not read in their hearts.’* (St. Augustine)”

#### **The certitude of faith establishes Revealed Law as the rock solid foundation for our hope:**

# 157 *“Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God Who cannot lie. ... revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but ‘the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives.’* (St. Thomas Aquinas)”

# 163 *“When we contemplate the blessings of faith even now, ... , it is as if we already possessed the wonderful things which our faith assures us we shall one day enjoy.”* (St. Basil)

***Purgatory completes casting off works of darkness as it prepares us for the full light of Christ:***

# 1030 *“All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.”*

2<sup>nd</sup> **“Put on the armor of light.”** This ‘light’ can be understood as joyful hope.

***In the Old Testament Abraham and the prophets provide the foundation for New Testament hope:***

#1819 *“Christian hope takes up and fulfills the hope of the chosen people which has its origin and model in the hope of Abraham, ... ‘Hoping against hope, he believed, and thus became the father of many nations.’ (St. Paul, Rom 4:18)*

#64 *“Through the prophets, God forms His people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting Covenant intended for all, to be written on their hearts. The prophets proclaim a radical redemption of the People of God, purification from all their infirmities, a salvation which will include all the nations. Above all, the poor and humble of the Lord will bear this hope.”*

***The Last Judgement establishes the complete victory of God’s justice/will/law/love:***

# 1040 *“The Last Judgment will reveal that God’s justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by His creatures and that God’s love is stronger than death.”*

**During this holy season of Advent let us cast off every sin as a work of darkness so that God can cloth us with the joyful hope of His light.** # 1843: *“By hope we desire, and with steadfast trust await from God, eternal life and the graces to merit it.”*