

REFLECTION FOR THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT HOPE

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 8: 28-39)



A HEAVY LOAD

One day God sent an angel to help an old man who went through life with a heavy load on his back. The angel approached the man and asked him, “Dear Sir, what do you have in your sack?” The old man replied, “I carry two things with me at all times. I carry my regrets and sorrows of the past and my worries and fears

of the future.” The angel then asked if he could see the sack. When he opened the sack, the angel found that there was nothing in it and said to the old man, “You see, there is nothing in here.” The old man replied in shock, “But how can that be. It is so heavy.” Then the angel explained, “The sack is empty because your regrets and sorrows of the past are long gone. Your worries and fears of the future are not here yet. You see you have been carrying nothing all this time.” Understanding the words of the angel, the old man took back the sack, folded it up, and threw it into a nearby river.

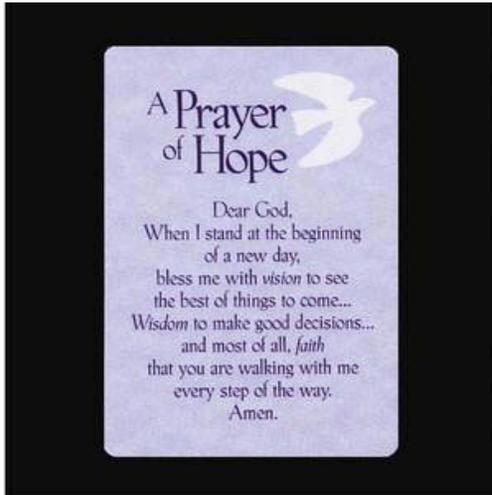
THE FUTURE AND HOPE

Last week, we reflected on when humans look back on their past, they tend to ignore the positive and fixate on the negative. Similarly, when humans look to the future, they tend to picture worst-case scenarios, not the best life has to offer. When they picture their futures, human beings more often than not experience fear and insecurity. They worry that they will not have a good job or will not be set financially. The list of human fears of the future is endless.

The story of the old man illustrates, however, that the future, just like the past, does not exist. We have no way of predicting what will happen to us in the future. To spend energy on worrying about the future is as unnecessary and debilitating as to regret the past. While we should make plans for the future, we need to recognize that any plans are only tentative and the future is beyond our control.

But while we have no control over our future, there is no need for those who follow Jesus to worry about what is to come. As St. Paul reminds the Christians in Rome, Jesus has defeated all sorts of evil, including sickness, sin, and even death for those he loves. So our futures are assured. In this life, we can overcome any obstacles that may come our

way with the providential love of God. In the life to come, Jesus has already prepared a place for us to spend eternity in the loving embrace of God. There is no need to fret or be anxious about the future because we are more than conquerors in Christ.



FIVE TIPS FOR DISCERNING BALANCE IN A BUSY LIFE

1. When in doubt, choose relationships.

In teaching, relationship to the students and their learning matters more than all the e-mails and administration. At home, playing a game of cards and chatting with the kids takes precedence over a perfectly clean house.

2. Pray, then go where called.

A spiritual director phrased it beautifully, “Do you know the difference between being drawn and being driven?” Sometimes God’s call is clear, but it takes courage to “go,” like Abraham, and follow where God calls rather than where we think we are “supposed” to go.

3. Love thyself.

Self-care is not selfish. Jesus reminds us to “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:29-31). Jesus doesn’t tell us to love neighbour *instead* of self, but to love neighbour *as* oneself. Loving others and loving oneself is also “one.”

4. Practice material simplicity.

The less physical “stuff” there is to worry about, the more relationships to God, people, and nature stay at the center.

5. Make room for spontaneity.

If life is too closely scheduled, we won’t have time for a friend who suddenly arrives from out of town, or for a few minutes to lie down on the grass just to watch the clouds.

Be not perplexed, Be not afraid,
Everything passes,
God does not change.
Patience wins all things.
He who has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.

—*Saint Teresa of Avila*

A PRAYER FOR HOPE

Heavenly father, I am your humble servant, I come before you today in need of hope. There are times when I feel helpless; there are times when I feel weak. I pray for hope. I need hope for a better future. I need hope for a better life. I need hope for love and kindness.

Some say that the sky is at its darkest just before the light. I pray that this is true, for all seems dark. I need your light, Lord, in every way. I pray to be filled with your light from head to toe. To bask in your glory. To know that all is right in the world, as you have planned, and as you want it to be.

Help me to walk in your light and live my life in faith and hope. In your name I pray,
Amen.

Prepared by Deacon Dr. Dominic Pullano,
St. David’s Parish, Maple