



Virtue of Hope

If ever there's a virtue associated with Easter, it is hope. Paradoxically, one of the Easter stories suggests that this virtue begins in its opposite – in utter despair and desolation. Consider the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, their hopes dashed having witnessed the death of Jesus. Not knowing that Jesus was the very stranger they were talking to, they tell him that he had been crucified and killed, and add: "Our own hope had been that he would be the one to redeem Israel..." Note "had been".

The stranger then gives them a lesson from Scripture that the Christ had to suffer and so enter his glory. Consider that the first step towards hope is not to deny the reality of suffering and death. Followers of Jesus are not exempt from suffering. Owning it is the beginning of recovering hope. It is not as though we are watching, in the comfort of our homes, a TV replay of the highlights once our team has won. We are not watching. We *are* the team! And the game is not over yet. The followers of Christ are not passive spectators, removed from the ambiguities of history. Disciples still confront the many faces of despair – in ourselves and others. There can be no denying the sheer power of evil in the world in which we live. False optimism represses the truth, that's why optimism is not another word for hope.

Hope is a virtue, cultivated in broken hearts by the abiding and loving presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the same Spirit that breathed divine life into the formless empty void at the

beginning of Creation; the same Spirit that breathed new life into the dead body of Jesus. Hope provides the assurance that our world is moving in Christ and in the power of his

Spirit into a God-given future, not a man-made future. God has made time for the whole of human history. God even allows for human freedom losing a sense of direction. God is patient. Hope as a virtue conforms itself to God's patience. It is constantly refashioned as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

Hope comes as a gift from outside the human system altogether. The Spirit who raises Jesus from the tomb is not

threatened by the forces of time and death. The death of Jesus reminds us that life is not an absolute. And the resurrection of Jesus reminds us that death is not an absolute. The only absolute is the "Lord and giver of life", whose love conquers hate, whose goodness conquers evil, whose light conquers darkness. Where despair is centred on the fear of death, hope is centred on God's wish for abundant life for all. John the Evangelist:

"We have seen and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us. We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us" (1 John 1:1-3).

Fellowship, indeed. Once the two despairing Emmaus disciples had seen Jesus alive, they rushed back to share their news in fellowship with all the other disciples. Hope is love restored. Hope is fellowship in Christ!



Emmaus by Janet Brooks-Gerloff, 1992
Benedictine Kornelimünster, Aachen

SUNDAY MASS

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:

The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth; by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, alleluia.

FIRST READING: Acts 2:36-41.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 23.

RESPONSE:

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

1. The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me;
he revives my soul. **R**
2. He guides me along the right path,
for the sake of his name.
Though I should walk in the valley of
the shadow of death,
no evil would I fear, for you are with me.
Your crook and your staff will give me comfort. **R**
3. You have prepared a table before me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. **R**
4. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for length of days unending. **R**

SECOND READING: 1 Peter 2:20-25.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Alleluia, alleluia! I am the good shepherd, says the Lord; I know my own, and my own know me. Alleluia.

GOSPEL: John 10:1-10.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON:

The Good Shepherd has risen, who laid down his life for his sheep, and willingly died for his flock, alleluia.

THE WEEK AHEAD

Live the Word

Mon 4 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 11:1-18; Psalm 42; John 10:11-18

Prayer can happen at any time and any place... we can be surprised by the unanticipated sense of God's nearness. Let us listen closely in every part of our lives. The Spirit of Love waits to reach and teach us there.

Tue 5 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 11:19-26; Psalm 87; John 10:22-30

Love is a decision, a choice, a daily practice – not a feeling. Sometimes it is really difficult to love. Reach out to someone in need today, allowing the Spirit to open your heart. Of course, the feelings will follow.

Wed 6 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 12:24–13:5; Psalm 67; John 12:44–50

Is it obvious to others that I am dedicated to Christ? Is it evident that Christ shapes my identity, my being? Or do I fill my life with preoccupations that permit me to be fragmented instead of focused on God?

Thu 7 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 13:13-25; Psalm 89; John 13:16-20

To pass on the faith to the next generation we need to pass on more than just rote prayers and Bible stories. We need to give them our stories, why faith is alive in us, and to give them reasons to seek and find God on their own.

Fri 8 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 13:26-33; Psalm 2; John 14:1-6

Deep down within ourselves, Jesus says we are to be untroubled, regardless of the adverse elements around us. Our hearts can be securely insulated within the protective walls of our faith in God.

Sat 9 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 13:44-52; Psalm 98; John 14:7-14

As baptized Catholics we all have the job of giving a voice to the Church and to our faith in God. We are God's voice – and hands and feet – in the world. It is a tall order – are we up to it?

Sun 10 May 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 6:1-7; Psalm 33; John 14:1-12

Nothing stands in the way of God's mercy and love except our own stubbornness. Right in front of our eyes, like every sunrise, God is making all things new. *Breathe in me, oh God, a spirit of hope.*

(KEY: SOLEMNITY; FEAST; Memorial; (Optional Memorial))

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