

Peter Daino

HOPE AND LIGHT, SESSION ONE: Day of Recollection on November 3rd, 2019

I was asked to share some thoughts on Hope, specifically Hope in a Marian Key.

I think the reading we had a few weekends ago sums up how many people in the world feel today November 3rd just 58 days before we arrive in a new decade.

How long Yahweh am I to cry for help

While you will not listen;

To cry "Oppression!" In your ear

And you will not save?

Why do you set injustices before me,

Why do you look on where there is tyranny?

Outrage and violence, this is all I see,

All is contention and discord flourishes. Habakkuk 2,3

In less than two months it will be 2020; the Teens will be over and we will be entering the Twenties. Will these be the roaring twenties or the snoring twenties when Christians stopped shouting, "Oppression," and fell asleep at the wheel?

It is timely then as we enter this new decade to reflect on our hopes for the 20s.

Saint Paul tells us that there are three things which last: Faith, Hope and Love. As I was reflecting on the way we use each of these words in sentences it struck me that Love has a direct object. E.G. I Love God. I Love my Friend. Even faith can work in the same way if we simply use its synonym Trust. I Trust God. I Trust my friend.

With Hope it is different. I Hope in God. I Hope for Heaven. It seems to need a preposition, or a bridge. And it's the same in French and Swahili. Hope needs a preposition or a bridge; Hope is a little distant from its object; it seeks, it travels.

The closest I could come to eliminating a preposition for Hope, using a word that is not a perfect fit – like trust is for faith – I say the closest word I could think of is Desire. I Desire God. I Desire the Kingdom of Heaven. I Desire Peace and Justice.

In religious circles Desire has not always been fashionable. We were told to curb our desires, to control our desires.

But let me tell you: Desire is a Flame, Desire is a Fire. And without Desire I contend you cannot really have a spiritual life, or really any life at all. Desire is energy. Desire is motion, action. It's the opposite of snoring.

So what do we desire. The prophet Haggai asks us:

“So now... think; take stock; what do you really desire? You eat but still hunger; you drink but still thirst; you clothe yourselves but can't get warm, and your wages run out through the holes in your pockets.” Haggai 1: 6-7

What kind of desire is a holy fire? What kind of desire feeds our deepest hunger?

In Luke 12:49 Jesus says, “I have come to set the world on fire, how I wish it were already ablaze.” Of all the desire statements of Jesus in the Gospel, there are three which are the most intense: Thy will be done, Thy Kingdom come, How I wish it were already ablaze! By his spirit alive in us, we, too, desire a world on fire: Thy will be done, Thy Kingdom come, Thy Love revealed -- Bright, and Blazing!

How does it feel? A life of hope? A life on fire?

I find surrendering to the Spirit of Jesus, the Fire of Jesus, takes me beyond the self I knew, beyond what I thought were my limitations. Hope is an adventure, a bit scary, involves risk. But it makes you Feel intensely alive!

I was not in the USA when 9/11 happened. But when I returned a few years later, I was surprised how Security had become the watchword. Instead of “See you later,” or the light hearted: “See you later alligator; in a while crocodile,” I heard people say: “Be Safe, Stay Safe” or loudspeakers telling you: “Report suspicious activity.” And here and there color codes- red, orange- to remind you to be afraid.

If, as Haggai implied, your main desire is to be well fed, well hydrated, well clothed, and always safe and secure then you are not ready for adventure.

In the story of Sir Galahad, the knights agree to go on a quest, but thinking it would be a disgrace to go forth in a group, each entered the forest, at one point or another, where they saw it to be thickest, a bit risky; each knight went into the

dark forest where there was no way or path, and as we might say: they had to use their inner GPS, i.e. the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Mark Batterson calls the Holy Spirit by its Celtic name, 'An Geadh Glas' which means Wild Goose. Pastor Mark writes: "I can't think of a better description of what it's like to live a spirit-led life. It's a Wild Goose Chase! I have no idea where I am going half the time, but God is in the business of positioning us in the right place at the right time."

Hope is an adventure. It is not only a land adventure through a dark forest. It can be an adventure at sea. Imagine you are Peter on a stormy night, late at night, sailing in a boat crossing the Sea of Galilee. Imagine you suddenly see Jesus walking toward you on the water. "Do not be afraid," he tells you; for it is I – or as the biblical Greek literally reads, "for I am." You are Peter, the impetuous one, so you step out of the boat and start walking across the water toward your master. In the language of the Wisdom tradition, you are under the sway of 'Gravitation from Above.'

You're pulled up, as Cynthia Bourgeault writes in her Wisdom books. Your heart is so profoundly fixed on Jesus that you rise briefly to Jesus' level of being, a level of being at which the laws of the physical universe are transcended. You nearly make it, too – but suddenly you feel the storm against your face, realize what you're doing is impossible, and become frightened. And, of course, at that moment you sink."

Pastor Cynthia goes on to explain what just happened to you by citing Maurice Nicoll, a fellow Wisdom Teacher: "As one's level of being increases, receptivity to higher meaning increases. As one's level of being decreases, the old meanings return." And one sinks, like Peter did. One shrinks, one sinks.

Think about that: "As one's level of being increases, receptivity to higher meaning increases." The diarist Anais Nin often said: The greater your courage, the more life opens to you, and offers you. With greater courage, more of your own life becomes available to you. Courage reveals the meaning and mission of your soul.

So how do we reach Jesus' level of Being from our present levels, our present situations? The Mad Hatter in Alice in Wonderland says to Alice: "How you get there is where you will arrive." If you walk in the way of fear, then you will arrive

in the place of fear. If you walk in the way of hope, then you will arrive in the place of hope. How you move into the next phase, determines your destination. So, give yourself up to hope, let go, let “Gravitation from Above” have its sway over you.

To sum up what I’ve been saying: Hope is Fire. Hope is an Adventure. Hope is Desire; Theological Hope, as in the Pauline triplet of Faith, Hope, and Love, is the Desire of Jesus. The intensity of that Desire will make you Holy.

As with Love, so too with Hope, we witness to Jesus: “They’ll know you are my disciples by Your Hope.”

The title of my talk is Hope and Light. I’ve spoken about Hope. Now, about Light.

Today is the day when we set our clocks an hour back, Fall Back. And the days will grow darker. Some of us suffer from SAD Seasonal Affective Disorder. Or if not the full blown SAD, perhaps small letter sad in the darker months ahead. That is why I was asked to talk about Light. And I propose as an antidote to SAD ---

GLAD or GLORIOUS LIGHT ABLAZE DAUNTLESS.

There is only one place in the Gospel where I found the word GLAD.

So, let’s start there, in the early life of Jesus Christ. Or as we say: Joyful Mysteries.

Which are about the 3 Joyful Decades Jesus had in Nazareth! Consider this: When Jesus’ Mother Shared with him, his Child-Hero Stories, that was the only Good News he heard.

Glad Tidings! The shining stars, the Choir of Angels singing Peace on Earth, singing those Glad Tidings of Messiah’s Birth. Glad Tidings indeed! Shepherds hasten to Bethlehem, and adore at the Manger. Glad Tidings! The Magi journey from the East, the Marvelous Gifts, The Star, the Big Bright Star.

Before Passion Week and Easter Week these Marian stories were the Gospel. And it is the only Gospel Jesus knew growing up, this was the Good News he got from his mother. And this Good News was known then as GLAD Tidings. GLAD! It is the only mention of GLAD I found in the New Testament, so GLAD was Mary’s Gospel for Jesus growing up.

My mother kept a Baby Book for each of her six children. And she would enlighten each of us, embolden each of us with hero stories about our early achievements. Later, in adult life when we failed, these stories of our “heroic childhood” acted as vaccinations against defeatism and sadness.

I see the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary as pages from Mary’s Baby Book for Jesus. In the rosarian imagination all these wonders happened, and for Mary they were treasures she gave her son; glowing gifts with truer brightness than any magi gold. Mary meant these Hero Stories, I think, as vaccinations for Jesus who would face in adult life rejection and the temptation to defeatism and sadness.

We move forward now from the Joyful Mysteries to the Mysteries of Light. Let’s focus on the 4th Mystery of Light. I would like us to imagine the Transfiguration: the unveiling of the Glorious Light burning in Jesus Christ. Three apostles, Peter, James and John climbed Mount Tabor with Jesus and witnessed this Luminosity of Christ’s Divine Nature. It must have been truly a peak experience when awe and bliss filled the hearts of these disciples.

Using the Light of Mount Tabor let us try something recommended by our new bishop Douglas Lucia. In the Catholic Sun a few weeks ago he shared with readers his practice of the five finger prayer, something he learned from Pope Francis.

Bishop Lucia wrote: “The thumb is closest finger to you. So start by praying for those closest to you. The next finger is the index. Pray for those who teach you, mentor you. The third finger is the tallest. Pray for our leaders, both in government and in the church. The fourth finger is the ring finger. It is our weakest finger. It reminds us to pray for the weakest, the sick, or those plagued by problems. Finally, we have our smallest finger, the pinky. This finger reminds you to pray for yourself. Seek the wisdom to know that God is with you.

Using the five finger rosary and the Luminosity of Mount Tabor let’s:

Say the Hail Mary on our thumbs picturing Light shining on family and friends.

Say the Hail Mary on our index fingers picturing Light shining from our mentors.

Say the Hail Mary on our third finger, praying our leaders be enlightened.

Say the Hail Mary on our ring finger praying for healing light to the suffering.

Say the Hail Mary on our pinky, praying for our own enlightenment.

(Pray together five finger rosary). Great... We're going to begin a quiet half hour of prayer. I'd like to suggest that you consider using the mysteries of light.

The mysteries of light are: Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan, The Wedding of Cana, Proclamation of the Kingdom, The Transfiguration, The First Eucharist.

Allow me to make a few comments to help you into these mysteries. You may not want to ponder each of them in the short time we have today. Instead you might want to consider the following: the middle one, Proclamation of the Kingdom is the key to the two on either side of it. Jesus told anyone who would listen that the Kingdom of Heaven was NEAR AT HAND. In other words, heaven and earth are not so far apart, and in certain places and at certain times the luminosity of heaven breaks through to us. These places were known to the Celts as "Thin Places." In the life of Jesus, the Jordan River and Mount Tabor were Thin Places. In the life of Jesus, the Wedding of Cana and the Last Supper were Thin Moments.

Take a few minutes to ponder a couple Thin Places in your life, Holy Places, where you had a glimpse of God's Light breaking through to you. Ponder also Moments in your life when a curtain opened, you were outside of time. Remember and ponder those Ecstatic Moments, when you knew clarity and lightness of heart.

During the second half of the meditation period you might consider the future: New Places where you can go to shine your light; and you might consider New Times coming in the decade ahead, when your light can shine, so we'll see the Twenty Twenties Transfigured!

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