

ignite

1Q 2025

A publication of St. Ignatius of Antioch Catholic Church

We are pilgrims of hope.



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St. Ignatius' Doors of Hope p.8-11

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EXCLUSIVE!

:contents

- 6 Christ's Hope in our Youth
- 7 Christ's Hope in our Elderly
- 12 Hope as a Fruit of the Holy Spirit
- 14 St. Vincent de Paul: Ministers of Hope
- 16 St. Ignatius: Pilgrims of Hope
- 18 Defining Hope
- 20 The Gift of Salvation



On Christmas Eve of 2024, Pope Francis will, with pomp and circumstance, open the Holy Door at the Vatican, an action that will initiate the start of the Church's Jubilee Year of 2025, a Holy Year. *"For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you."* (Leviticus 25:12)

The word "Jubilee" comes from the Hebrew word *yobel*, meaning ram's horn, the trumpet that was used to announce the beginning of the Jubilee year for the people of Israel. It is of interest to see how our Catholic tradition of celebrating a Holy Year every 25 years has its roots in this Jewish one: in Leviticus 25:10, God tells the Israelites:

"And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family." (Leviticus 25:10)

According to the Hebrew scholar, Jonathan Cahn, the 50th year was intended to be a special time favorable for "release, freedom, return, and restoration." Cahn writes: "The Jubilee was the year of return, when the dispossessed would return to that from which they were separated." Cahn explains that whatever events had occurred during the previous 49 years, whereby individuals had lost family members or

friends or property or possessions, these individuals would receive restitution of land as the original owners, or forgiveness of monetary debt.

Little is recorded about the earliest celebrations of this Jubilee ordinance, but it seems that God had intended not only for the *individual* to be restored, but also that *the entire land* of Israel—confiscated over time by its enemies—would be restored to its ancestral owners. Jonathan Cahn has provided a remarkable summary of how this ancient edict was carried forward from the 16th century until now. Its amazing details bear repeating:

The era begins in 1517 when the Ottoman Turks took the land of Israel.

Counting seven cycles of 50 years each, that is after 350 years, (1517-1867) the Ottoman sultan issued a law to allow for the land to be released to the Jewish people: these were the seeds of the first restoration!

In the same year of 1867, the Archaeologist Charles Warren accidentally found the ruins of the City of David, that is, the original city of Jerusalem, which had been lost. Once this happened, from that year onward, the Jewish people began returning to their land, reclaiming, re-

storing, and replanting: the beginning of Israel's modern resurrection!


However, the land was still under the control of the Ottomans. In the year of Jubilee those who occupy the land must depart from it. Thus, 50 years later, in

The notion that the Catholic Church should—in imitation—keep a designated year as a celebratory year, was an idea first enacted by Pope Boniface VIII, in the 13th century. He decreed that every 100th year be celebrated as a jubilee year, but by the time of Pope Paul II in the 15th century, the custom had been changed to every 25th year; still the case.

Burke comments: *"When we go on pilgrimage, we leave the familiar surroundings of our everyday life to journey to a holy place."* Pilgrimages expand our familiar world by our companionship with other pilgrims, focusing on the needs of those around us, sharing the faith. Once at our chosen destination, we pass through the "Holy Door," a

The History of the Jubilee

by Arlene Scott



1917,
during
World War
I, the British
Commander
General Edmund Allenby
advanced into Israel and the
Ottomans fled. Following that,
the British government issued
the "Balfour Declaration"
which promised the return of
the land to the Jewish people:
the second restoration!

Fifty years later, in 1967, the Six-Day War broke out. On the third day of that war, Israeli soldiers entered the gates of the ancient city. They wept and prayed at the Western Wall! The Jewish people had returned to their homeland, Israel!

Fifty years later, on June 5, 2017, the U. S. Senate passed a resolution recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and President Trump issued the "Jerusalem Declaration" which officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. President Trump moved the American Embassy to Jerusalem. This was the first legal recognition by a major world leader or power!

Rather than only celebrating return or restoration, the Popes decide on a relevant theme that will carry the faithful through the entire year. The theme chosen by Pope Francis for this coming Holy Year will be "Pilgrims of Hope." The Pope explains that he chose this particular theme because of the experience that the entire world has recently undergone as a result of the pandemic which, as he puts it, *"generated feelings not only of grief, but also, at times, of doubt, fear and disorientation."* He points out that it *"made us experience first-hand not only the tragedy of dying alone, but also the uncertainty and fleet- ingness of existence, and in doing so, has changed our very way of life."*

We can all attest to the feelings of loss in the wake of the pandemic: loss of loved ones, loss of freedoms, loss of hope. The Pope states: *The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire.* How interesting that the Pope uses the words "restore, renew, rebirth," for they echo God's mandate about restoration.

Every Holy Year has elements of design that repeat from jubilee to jubilee. One of these elements places an emphasis on a "return" to Rome in the form of a pilgrimage. Cardinal Raymond

symbol and reminder of our final passage into heaven.

During the Holy Year we are encouraged to increase our times of prayer, of participation in liturgical events, and of more frequent reception of the sacrament of reconciliation. Also, a plenary indulgence is always a special feature of the Jubilee experience. This link will take you to a website which explains the numerous ways one can receive a plenary indulgence:

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/257672/how-to-obtain-a-plenary-indulgence-during-the-2025-jubilee>

The Church uses the time of the Holy Year to make all of us aware of our need for more intense prayer and a deeper relationship with God. Cardinal Burke writes: *"On pilgrimage, we remember that here on earth, we have no lasting city and that our days on earth, be they many or few, are a journey to the lasting home which Our Lord has prepared for us in Heaven."* And once there, we will be in eternal rebirth, renewal, and restoration!

Youth Ministry

Hope in the youth

Hope seems to be the word of the year in the Catholic Church and rightfully so. However, many of us misunderstand what Hope is and what we need to do with the hope in our lives. First and foremost, Hope, as defined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, is 1 of the 3 theological virtues by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness. In other words, we desire heaven with Christ, and nothing else, to make us happy. Not our accomplishments, not our financial pursuits, not the comfort of living in the luxurious 21st century.

On the surface, we can be discouraged and left wondering how could we possibly embark on this journey of cultivating hope? We must first recognize that Hope comes from God alone, a gift He pours out every moment. And in cooperation, we should surrender our desire for control and trust the grace of the Holy Spirit. Needless to say, not all of us are fully living a life of surrender. But in God's goodness, He places visible signs for the faithful to hope in: the sacraments, the Church and her faithful members.

Being the youth minister here at St. Ignatius has been filled with encountering the Lord's hope manifested in the future generations of God's Kingdom here on Earth. Week in and week out, the children gather for community and formation at our Sunday Lifenights. In the midst of their responsibilities and expectation pushed onto them by the world and their parents, the young consistently come in multitudes. They understand that the yearning in their hearts for fulfillment can be quenched in the time they spend with Christ. This is why they spend a weekend on retreat, a week in summer camp, and hours in LifeTeen. The teenagers, in all their confusion and exploration, desire the glory and peace of heaven that comes when we move beyond this life. Should we not also do the same?

If hope is lacking in your life, I challenge you to pray for the gift of hope and to see our youth ministry living it out here in Tarpon Springs. **Get involved with the children who are our brightest sign of Hope given by God.**



Article by Kyle Romero, Director of Youth Ministry

Christ's HOPE is for all ages.

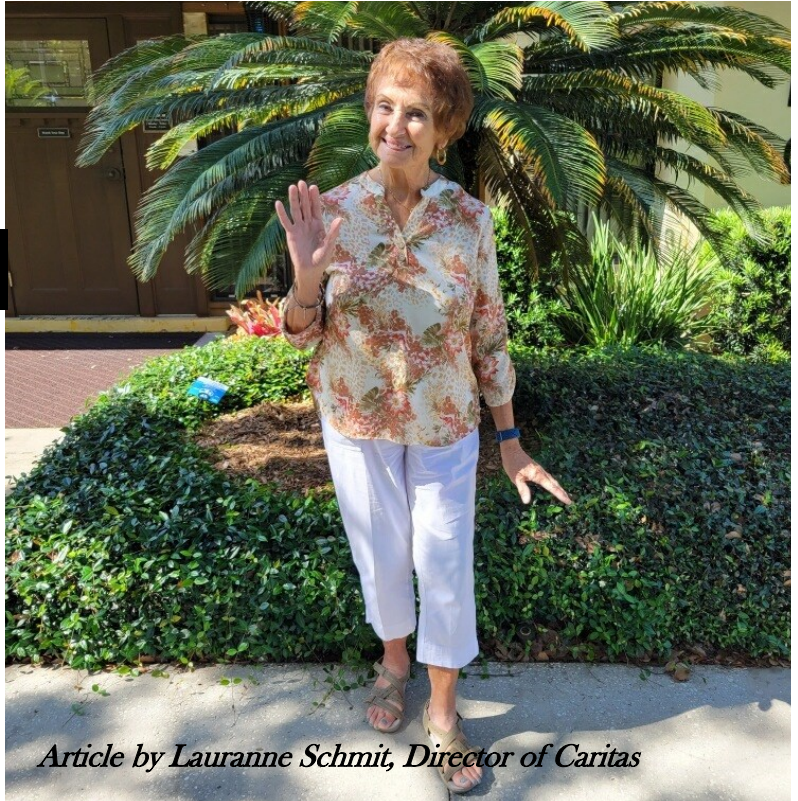
Caritas

Hope in the elderly

The motto of our Caritas Ministry is taken from St. Mother Teresa, "...to do small things with great love." We minister to those who are sick, hospitalized, homebound or living in facilities. Since they cannot come to Church, we bring Church to them by praying with them and bringing them Holy Communion once a week. For those who are able, we bring them to Church every Tuesday for rosary, Mass and lunch. Many of our people are seniors who can no longer drive, who live alone and/or who have outlived family and friends and may feel a sense of loss and loneliness.

Our ministry is a "hope-giving" one. In striving to be the hands, feet and face of Christ, we try to give hope, comfort and love to those we serve and, in doing so, we end up getting so much more in return. We develop close relationships and strong "family ties" with our participants and each other. We celebrate birthdays, and send cards to those in the hospital or who are recovering from an injury, assuring them of our love and our prayers.

For many of our Tuesday participants, this is the only time they get out of the house and are able to talk and share with others their own age, who have had similar life experiences. They treasure this time together and look forward to each coming week. While many of them have been drivers (which we need more of!) and Eucharistic ministers themselves, they are now on the receiving end of the spectrum, which is not always easy to accept. We acknowledge their past



Article by Lorraine Schmit, Director of Caritas

service, and treasure the "gift" they are to us each time we meet, pray and share a meal together.

Through our Caritas Ministry, we try to live the words of Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Spes Non Confundit*: "Surely we need to 'abound in hope' (Rom 15:13), so that we may bear credible and attractive witness to the faith and love that dwell in our hearts, that our faith may be joyful and our charity enthusiastic; and that each of us may be able to offer a smile, a small gesture of friendship, a kind look, a ready ear, a good deed, in the knowledge that, in the Spirit of Jesus, these can become, for those who receive them, rich seeds of hope."

Most of our volunteers are retired but want to continue making a difference in the world in some small way. Our Caritas ministry enables them to fulfill that hope in ways they could never imagine. If you were to ask anyone of them, or any of our participants as well, they would tell you that this is one of the most rewarding and joyful things they do in their life each week. Come join us (now seeking drivers) and spread the hope of Christ to others!

DOORS

on the campus



Life Center Doors

DOORS of HOPE on the Campus of St Ignatius of Antioch Church

CCC 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 and grace of the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:30 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a LIVING HOPE through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time.

How do I see LIVING HOPE on the grounds of



Food Pantry/SVdP Doors

St Ignatius of Antioch? I see LIVING HOPE in the doors of every building. Think of what those doors of each building open to.

The LIFE CENTER buzzes with Faith Formation and Enrichment for both children and adults. As we pass down our faith, we live and share our HOPE for the kingdom of God to become manifest both here and now and in eternal life. DOORS to Formation and Enrichment with Scripture study classes open up to opportunities to learn about God who desires a personal relationship with each one of us, how God, through that desire, entered time and space as one of us in Jesus Christ, and who remains in and with us through his Holy Spirit and touches us personally in the Holy Sacraments.

We walk through the DOORS of the LIFE CEN-

DOORS of St. Ignatius



Early Childhood Center Doors

ENTER into a HOPE-FULL space with a Gift Shop with access to items that help us to stay on course during our pilgrimage to God's eternal kingdom. Rosary Makers walk through the DOORS weekly to craft colorful tools that we use to keep us focused during our journey to the kingdom. The Polish School walks through the DOORS weekly to foster and preserve a deeply Catholic culture full of HOPE. DOORS to rooms in the LIFE CENTER open to discussion spots in the Church's field hospital for those who have been absent and wish to reconnect IN HOPE to the practice of their faith. Men and women who are bruised from broken marital relationships come through the DOORS to meet and help others like themselves to Survive and Thrive through their brokenness IN HOPE. DOORS of HOPE open to meetings of Girl and



Pregnancy Center Doors

Cub Scouts as they seek to grow in their faith and learn to develop skills and values that will HOPE-FULLY enable them to become responsible members of their communities.

DOORS to the LIFE CENTER open to gathering spaces for pray-ers in HOPE in the Padre Pio Prayer Group and to formation in a lifestyle focused on the Holy Eucharist with the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament. In January, people who walk through the DOORS will begin Prayer & Life Workshops or perhaps join a discussion group on the book The Fourth Quarter of Your Life - all HOPING to find ways to strengthen their stamina for the journey to the eternal kingdom.

Through the DOORS to the HALL and the LIFE CENTER, men enter to gather in LIVING HOPE as Knights of Columbus and/or Brothers in Christ.

H



Youth House Door

Women enter to gather in **LIVING HOPE** as the Ladies' Council. Men and women recovering from the loss of loved ones and working through bereavement issues walk through the **DOORS** to gather monthly to support each other in **LIVING HOPE**. Weekly, we bring through the **DOORS** our parishioners who are unable to join us during weekend liturgies, for Mass in the chapel and fellowship in **HOPE** so that they do not feel forgotten and alone and to confirm with them that we strive in **HOPE** to help each other on our journey to the kingdom.

The **DOOR** near the **FOOD PANTRY** is the entry to a hand up in **LIVING HOPE** with help and support from the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

The **DOORS** to the **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

O



Rectory Doors

CENTER open to a place of our **LIVING HOPE** for the future where our youngest children are cared for in a faith-based environment.

The **DOORS** to the **YOUTH HOUSE** open to a place of our **LIVING HOPE** for the future where teens and middle schoolers meet to share opportunities to grow closer to Jesus, deepen their faith and to socialize and have fun in a Christian environment. It is also a gathering place for prayer and formation of the Lay Carmelites and the Cenacle of Divine Mercy as **LIVING HOPE** means trusting that God will fulfill His promise of eternal life.

The **DOORS** to the **PREGNANCY CENTER** open to a place of help and support for **HOPEFUL CHOICES** for **LIFE** to be made along with continuing **HOPE** and **THANKSGIVING** to sup-

P



Chapel Doors

port CHOICES for LIFE that have been made. The DOORS to the RECTORY reflect our LIVING HOPE that the RECTORY will always be filled with, and we will have access to Holy Priests who will shepherd us to the eternal kingdom and nourish and heal us along the journey with the Holy Sacraments.

The most decorative DOORS on campus, the DOORS to the CHAPEL, open to holy space for individual prayer during the week and for our Spanish community to offer HOPEFUL prayers and the Vigil Mass on Saturdays that is flavored by their cultural heritages and prayed in their language.

And finally, the DOORS to our CHURCH open to the apex of our LIVING HOPE as we gather in community for Mass and prayer, or even singly in

E



Church Doors

adoration, before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. Through the DOORS of the CHURCH, we enter one of the places closest on earth to the reality of the eternal kingdom to which we journey as HOPE filled people. Walking through the DOORS of the CHURCH, together or alone, we express our faith in the one true God and lean on our LIVING HOPE in the promises of Jesus Christ of eternal life with Him, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit.

OPEN THE DOORS AND COME ON IN TO ST. IGNATIUS' PLACES OF HOPE!



By Christine Grieco

While not explicitly mentioned in the Galatians passage, the Bible frequently associates hope with the work of the Holy Spirit, implying it is a fruit of the Spirit. I looked for a testimonial of how participating in the charismatic prayer group at St. Ignatius has increased the spiritual fruit of hope in one of our members' lives. It is assumed that anyone living a "Life in the Spirit" is experiencing the fruits in an amplified way. It is just this obvious, outward movement of the Holy Spirit that draws people to the Charismatic movement in the first place. So, knowing that I was putting together an entire issue of Ignite on the concept of Christian hope, I interviewed one of our members who has an unusual story about how Hope has grown in her own life. Below is her story in her own words.

I decided not to attend the first Life in the Spirit Seminar in the September of 2023, because it was on the anniversary of my husband's death. I now know that was a mistake. I should have gone that day, nobody knew me. But that didn't stop me from showing up for the very next Thursday night prayer meeting. I just had a knowing that I should be there. I grew to love it so quickly that by November I found myself taking over hospitality. A sign that I was on the right track was a profound experience I had of the Holy Spirit during my daughter's wedding. Her marriage took place at a Hindu temple, and when you're a widow, you are considered 'bad luck', and so I was expected to stay in the shadows. But instead, the minister announced that I should remain 'on the mandapa', the platform where the ceremony was taking place. That in itself was a miracle. But just then, I looked out at the congregation and saw, in my Spirit, a monk in a long black robe with a hood walking through all the aisles with his hands outstretched. I assumed it was the spiritual leader of our charismatic group, Father Joseph Paek. I felt comforted in this unfamiliar situation, and I recalled the scripture, "Even there Your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast." (Psalm 139:10) But I had never seen him in those clothes, or making that gesture with his arms, until a subsequent event the following September where he came dressed in full Benedictine habit, and in later charismatic meetings when he walked with his arms out when the Holy Spirit manifested. Those were affirmations that God had indeed been with me in that situation.

Skip ahead to January of 2024 when I went on a Marian pilgrimage. At Montserrat I had another profound vision, this time of Jesus. In the vision, I heard him tell me to "Get on your knees and take off the crown of thorns that you wear. I have already worn it for you." I took that to mean that the victim mentality that I had adopted over the years since my husband's murder was not of God. I was also experiencing a physical tightness in my throat every time I prayed "forgive us our

trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us". I could not bring myself to say those words. But after Jesus told me to remove my crown of thorns, I did. Then He told me to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I did that, too. Immediately I felt completely healed. And I found that the next time I was in the charismatic prayer group, and said the Lord's Prayer, I had absolutely no trouble saying the words of forgiveness. That is another miracle, because there was a whole group of people I had to forgive: the murderer, all those involved in the trial, and also myself, for feeling helpless at the murder, for putting God second my whole life, for wearing a widow's crown of thorns so pridefully. I now know the true healing power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It's not just all the people you have to forgive; it's also all the things you have to let go. Now all I literally feel is Faith, Hope and Love. I attribute my openness to these visions and my subsequent repentance completely to the Holy Spirit working in me through the charismatic group. I have a deeper awareness of the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of prayer, and the power of faith. He really is everywhere for me, all the time. Very real. He makes my faith "stick" better for me.

"Every moment is a holy moment" has become a mantra for me. For instance, this past Spring I was having a bad day. I hopped in my truck, and I told God, 'I'm just so angry! Will you please help me?' And I heard a voice say, "Look up!" At first, I didn't see anything. But He repeated Himself, and I grabbed the steering wheel and leaned forward. Above my head I saw this knot in the wood that was clearly a heart,



radiating out other hearts. I had never seen it before. But now I can't unsee it. It's like a reminder for me of His love every single day. *Every moment is a holy moment.* There are no coincidences. Recently, someone came up to me who needed my help. I was frustrated because it was detouring my plans, but because of charismatic prayer I now have a softness. I'm just here to serve, to fill a void. "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28) I have been ransomed in order to give the rest of my life as a servant. But this has not always been so.

Seven years ago, I had arrived at my Tampa home late at night and was in my garage when a neighbor called out. I went over, and my husband followed. My neighbor then proceeded to shoot my husband ten times, killing him. Of course, I was in complete shock. Then totally devastated. I suffered years of PTSD. For a long time, I could not even speak. My mind would run faster than my mouth could catch up. And I was quite uncomfortable in public places. But now, seven years

Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

later, I have a remarkable truth to profess. The cold fact is that my spiritual life is actually better, *now*. Of course, I miss my husband, and my daughters miss their dad. But God has taken His rightful place as #1 in my life. And the truth is that in living this close to God there is unbelievable grace. There are all kinds of struggles, but there is still no place I'd rather be than where I am right now. When my husband was living, God took second place. I looked to my husband for guidance in how to pray and how to worship. But now I realize that I had allowed my husband to become a wall between me and God, not a connector. He did not inhibit me going to Mass or forbid my faith. But even though he was a cradle Catholic, we never talked about faith, and we never even prayed together. Now that he is no longer here, I don't have that sounding board, so I go directly to Jesus. The Holy Trinity has taken over my life. I have three completely unique relationships with each of them. When I talk just to God, I feel Jesus on one side and the Holy Spirit on the other. If I talk to one of the others, they rotate, but I can still feel all three of them there. And that connection is what charismatic prayer has brought. On the night of the murder, I cried out for Jesus. I knew in that moment that I would not be able to handle what was happening without him. And then this whole Divine Love Story began, and it's continuing to grow. My Divine Spouse Jesus brought His Father, and the Holy Spirit. And now He's bringing me closer to Mary. As our relationship grew, I had this period of shamefulness and guilt when I realized that Jesus had been waiting for me the whole time, like a lover: at the train station, at the airport, in the taxicab, at the end of the subway, getting off the boat. All my life, I kept walking right past Him. And he was waiting there at the murder – it was me, my husband, the murderer... and Jesus. I'm ashamed when I realize that it took this horrific tragedy to finally make Him number one.

Two years after the murder, I felt called to leave Tampa. I actually heard a voice say, "Get out." I looked in seven different states. None of the houses I considered panned out. Then I was home one morning when I heard a voice say, "Tarpon Springs." I'd never even been there, so I ignored it. A few minutes later, it came back. I ignored it again. Finally, when I heard it a third time, at 8:30 in the morning, I put my shoes on and drove to Tarpon Springs. I scanned the ads and found an open house, and when I walked through it, I felt God was calling me to buy it. I prayed, walked, experienced some definite signs. It was in rough shape, so I made a lowball cash offer and by 2 o'clock the same day I was signing the contract. Little did I know that Tarpon Springs would be the home of the fastest growing charismatic prayer group in the state, the center of my change, my healing. But God knew... another miracle. I now consider that house my retreat center. And not only mine, but I've hosted a Mass in that home.

I am now approaching the next hurdle in my life. My husband's murderer has found a legal loophole and has been granted another a "relief hearing." I'm not worried. But I am sad that he hasn't accepted what he's done. He still pleads innocent despite all the evidence presented. I've had to testify over and over, and each time I continually pray, "God you were there. You know exactly what happened. Let Your words be my words. Let Your words be my words."

It is now seven years following the incident and I sit in adoration, and I speak to God. *Why didn't he shoot me, too? Why was I spared?* And the answer can be as simple as, so that I can wash dishes at Caritas. To heal my kids and guide them to Christ. To be a good grandma now. To meet my friends at the charismatic group. To live in the light. To be like St. Therese and do little things with great joy. To those who might think I'm in a honeymoon phase with Jesus and this charismatic group, and that eventually this reality will crash in on me, and I'll "go back to normal," I say it's like at Pentecost. The disciples were fundamentally changed by an encounter with the Holy Spirit. They were no longer afraid. They were willing to die for the cause. I'm also not the same person anymore. I now see that there is actually freedom in death. My life now is the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. You get the fruit of the healing, and you give it to yourself and to your kids first, but eventually there is so much fruit that it's spilling over and you have to give it to others. That's the evidence of the true conversion I've had. The change is producing fruit.

How do I sum all this up? I keep going back to this: my husband's death opened a freedom for my heart to worship God in my way. I was led to the charismatic prayer group which has grown my knowledge of the Holy Spirit. It's no longer a "knowing about." It's true 'knowing.' The Divine Love Story began that day, the path of hope had begun. My husband's murder saved my life.

*As the interviewer, I have to comment. Who could look at an incident of a violent murder as being a path to hope? It's obviously not how my friend felt that day. **That path to hope has been built, one little brick at a time.***

HOPE

A fruit of the Holy Spirit

An Interview by Lynn K. Kilbride

ence, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control."



HOPE IS NOT A THING THAT WE DO... HOPE IS A GIFT THAT WE SHARE.

I don't hope, I PRAY. I don't hope, I TRUST. I have hope because I HAVE FAITH.

Hope, to me, is a glowing ember that keeps us warm in the moments when our faith is fleeting and we wonder if God has abandoned us.

Daily at SVdP, we face people who are desperate and afraid and feel as though they have run out of options. So many have accepted "panic mode" as normalcy. They shuffle through our doors, just another cog in the wheel of poverty. They don't really see us, they don't expect to be seen, they are just going through the paces to get whatever sustenance they need for another day...only as much as they can carry. Many of our un-housed neighbors have accepted that this is all there is for them in life. It is who they are, it is their role in our society. They are "The Homeless". They just want enough help for the day...hope is not for them. It is here that WE become the embers....

pantry which is bursting with donations from YOU. We are so grateful! It is a saying in SVdP that "No form of charity is foreign to the society." We are pretty good at thinking outside of the box to help people. We go to the ends of the earth to find a solution! Once we have a big win, when we've witnessed the light of Christ enter our space and transform a situation through us...it is like witnessing a miracle.

So, the thing about HOPE is that when you give it away...it expands. Embers become flames and I truly believe that St. Ignatius is on fire! How do I know? Well, you know the movie line "If you build it, they will come."? We have built it and they keep coming. Every night, I am told, our campus becomes an encampment for our un-housed neighbors. They are sleeping in doorways and behind bushes. This situation does come with some issues that we are addressing.

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL MINISTERS OF HOPE

We see them. We talk to them. We call them by name. We ask about their lives...Where are they from? Where do they sleep? Is there anything else that we can provide for them to make things better "out there?" We pray them in and we pray them out. We do not do transactions at SVdP, we seek transformation, for them and for ourselves.

We share our hope which is our gift, because we have prayed, and because we trust that our Lord is with us in these moments. This is our faith. We are not simply asked...we are commanded to do this work... to serve one another, to love our neighbors, to feed the poor, to clothe them. To restore dignity where it has been lost.

SVdP opened its doors on June 5, 2024. Since then, in addition to serving our un-housed neighbors, we have spent well over \$40,000 keeping our housed neighbors housed! We work hard keeping electricity and other utilities flowing, providing beds to sleep on and sometimes putting displaced people on busses to get home to families who love them. Nobody ever leaves hungry, thanks to our food

But I am cheering on the inside because I know that St. Ignatius is our Father's house...and He is calling them home. I know because two of our "regulars" who have been coming to our food Pantry for years now have jobs! We built them up, believed in them, gave them resources on where to look and how to apply...and the flame of hope ignited in them! From "Homeless" to "Employee"! The stories are endless about people who are changing their lives because, for the first time in a long time, somebody is encouraging them. Somebody cares and calls to check on them. We create just enough of a spark to ignite the flame in them again.

There is an energy as we work the process that we've honed. There is a presence. Not only have we become the face of Christ to our neighbors, but we see Him in those we are serving as well. That was the goal from the start. Over time, the chaos becomes a rhythm, and God's perfect will becomes tangible.

Ask the Lord how you can share your hope. I promise you... the Lord of all HOPE will answer.

By Carri Bell, Director of the St. Ignatius Society of St. Vincent de Paul



PILGRIMS *of hope*

We associate hope with winning the lottery or getting that dream car we always wanted; however, the definition of Christian hope is different and sustains our lives. Christian hope is that which rests in what we believe. Hope can be as strong as our belief in God's goodness and faithfulness and the knowledge of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. We are pilgrims of hope, when life hits us hard with tragedy, sickness, disappointment, and grief, we have an anchor to lean on as we journey through the joys and sorrows of life on our way to eternity.

I want to share the stories of two such pilgrims who live daily in hope as they journey to the Shrine of Saint Michael in Tarpon Springs. The enduring theme in both these stories is the

peace of God they experience and the importance of intercessory prayer.

Angela Pisatura

I love going on this pilgrimage, not only to pray to St Michael, and to thank him for our protection but also to journey with others. There's something new that we learn about the shrine or the Greek Orthodox Church every time we attend, also it's nice to talk to someone who has never been on this pilgrimage before. I make the journey to the shrine monthly, and I also go several times a month on my own. It's a peaceful and hopeful place to pray. Everyone has a special intention for which they are praying. We are filled with hope. I

enjoy sharing on the way back from the shrine too. It is nice to be able to pray with and for others. I noticed a spiritual miracle going on with a family member; it's something that I pray for every day. When I see all the Icons that are at the shrine of those who have been healed or who need prayer, it brings me closer to God. I have the opportunity to pray for others; going to the shrine gives hope for a miracle of healing according to God's holy and perfect will.

Patty Burton



I like the one-a-month walk from St. Ignatius to the shrine. I used to walk to the shrine once a week with a friend. We would go to the 9 am Mass, then to breakfast, and afterward, to the shrine. The woman who oversees the shrine recognized us and other visitors as well. It's a pleasant walk, and I feel at peace with God. I try to light two candles each time I go for those who are sick or need healing.
 Alan DeFrain

Defining Hope: “A Matter of Perspective” *by Arlene Scott*

Some time ago my husband and I took a trip to Rome and, like most tourists, toured the ancient sites. While we were at the site of the Colosseum, an incident occurred that underscores the title of this article. We were standing just inside the main entrance to the Colosseum, overlooking the arena. Directly in front of us, a section of earth had eroded and had created a steep chasm, causing a life-endangering fissure for anyone who might misstep. This area had been cordoned off by thick ropes and warning signs.

Just beyond the fissure stretched the arena floor where, in ancient times, myriad spectacles had taken place before the eyes of thousands of Roman spectators. I pondered the engineering feat it must have been—2000 years ago—to build such a towering structure without the aid of modern construction equipment. I wondered how they had done it.

Just then, a family of tourists gathered next to us, a mother and father, and three children, one of them a boy of about five years. I noticed them briefly, but my mind quickly returned to my reflections about the history of this famous place. In my imagination, I saw the hungry lions prowling the arena floor, and then pictured their rage as the Christian martyrs were led out into the arena. I could “hear” the taunts of the crowd, urging them on.

The drama playing out in my mind was interrupted by the high, thin voice of the five-year-old next to us. He had been studying the roped-off area and the fissure yawning before us. “Dad,” he asked as he

pointed to the other side of the chasm, “do you think that a grasshopper could jump from this ledge over the hole to that one?”

We all giggled a little. To the adults, this famous setting had likely triggered dark thoughts of the Roman justice system and of the violence of martyrdom. But, in the young boy’s mind there was only an imaginary grasshopper soaring upward over all the obstacles life could throw in its path, springing easily over every danger.

It was all a matter of perspective.

The thoughts we choose to think about life’s situations govern our attitude, whether it be despondent or hopeful. Pope Francis urges us to become “Pilgrims of Hope” during this Jubilee Year of 2025.

The dictionary defines “hope” as the expectant anticipation of future happiness. And haven’t we all hoped for some future thing or event? As children we hoped for that special Christmas present; as teens, we hoped our team would win the trophy; as adults we hoped we’d be hired for that plum position at work. But, St. Thomas Aquinas

suggests that we should hope for something larger than life here on earth. He wrote: “The proper and principal object of hope is eternal happiness. . . . we should hope from Him for nothing less than Himself, the enjoyment of God Himself.”

This definition takes us beyond optimistic expectations for this life, and pivots us to think of the next life. Catechism #1817 reads: “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.” In other words, hope cannot be fulfilled by our own efforts. “Hope” St. Thomas writes, “trusts in God’s omnipotence and mercy.”

Understanding God’s desire to help us is really important because, as we recognize our inclination to sin, we could lose hope altogether, become despondent, even fall into despair. Once in despair, “man ceases to hope for his personal salvation from God, for help in attaining it, or for the forgiveness of his sins. Despair is contrary to God’s goodness, to his justice—for the Lord is faithful to his promises—and to his mercy.” (CCC 1817) In so many gospel stories, Jesus demonstrates how dearly He wishes us to have hope when we feel the burden of our sins.

Pope Benedict has noted this in his book *Jesus of Nazareth*:

“In the history of Christian tradition, the good thief has become an image of hope—an image

am not worthy that You should enter under my roof.” (*Don’t I need to prepare my heart, practice virtue a little more, clean up my act, before Jesus will have anything to do with me?!*)

Again and again, Jesus seeks out the hopeless as He did with the woman at the well. Intimations of hope can be heard in her request: “Give me this water, sir.” (Jn 4:15) Hopeful confidence, too, was the motivation for Mary Magdalene’s entry into the dining hall of the Pharisee, clutching her alabaster jar of perfumed ointment. And once again, Jesus’ acceptance of her became a scandal to the onlookers because “He should have known what sort of woman she was.” (cf. Lk 7:39)

He, indeed, knows “what sort of people we are.” And He socializes with us, shares our very nature Himself, and understands our tendencies to lose

“The thoughts we choose to think about life’s situations govern our attitude.”

of the consoling certainty that God’s mercy can reach us even in our final moments, that even after a misspent life, the plea for his gracious favor is not made in vain.”

Pope Benedict comments that immediately after Dismas, the Good Thief, cries out, “Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom,” Jesus responds to him: “This day you will be with me in Paradise. . . . Jesus’ response goes beyond what is asked of Him. Instead of an unspecified future, He speaks of that very day!” Just as He answered the prayer of the thief, Jesus offers *us* hope in our very crying out.

Think of the way Jesus approached Zaccheus, peering down from his perch in the tree. “Zaccheus, hurry down. I mean to stay at your house today.” (Lk 19:5) In this instance, Jesus offered mercy even *before* Zaccheus acknowledged his sins! Jesus also took the first step toward another famous tax collector, Matthew who, after conversion became His disciple. This dispensation of hope for sinners was a cause of scandal to Jesus’ critics: “He dines with sinners.” Perhaps we, too, knowing our own sinfulness, are scandalized that Jesus wants to dine with *us*! “Lord, I

hope. If we cling to our hopeless thoughts about what cannot happen, we become victims of our own hopelessness. If we become depressed because the winds of life are against us, then we are not exercising hope. Virtues, like our muscles, get stronger if we exercise them.

So how do we strengthen the hope we already have?

Ask for an increase of hope. Pray in the Spirit, every time we are tempted to despair, or become despondent, or feel victimized. Choose to believe that Jesus is with us at all times, even until the end of the world! Believe He is speaking personally to us when He says He gives us authority to step on snakes and scorpions and no harm will come to us. (Luke 10:19) Recognize that God “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.” (Eph 3:20) Through hope we allow the victory of God in our lives!

We are bound to thank God for you always, beloved brothers in the Lord, because you are the first fruits of those whom God has chosen for salvation, in holiness of spirit and fidelity to truth. He called you through our preaching of the good news so that you might achieve the glory of our Lord, Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

As God chose people for salvation in the beginning of the Church, we also are chosen by God for salvation. We need to have conviction that One true living God chose us. And He called us to receive His salvation. It is indeed a “mystery” of God that we have been chosen and called out of the darkness of sins and death. With this calling of our salvation, we must respond to it in holiness of spirit and fidelity to truth. God respects the gift of free will/free choice given for us. He does not force us to follow His ways of eternal truth in holiness.

Even though God called us to be united with Him in holiness and truth, it is ultimately our choice to choose the gift of eternal salvation from Him by cooperating with His Grace in holiness and truth. One theologian said, “the ones who are in hell are all volunteers.” Let us volunteer to go to Heaven to be with God forever and ever! Let us choose His Ways, His teachings through the Church, not our ways!

When we read the Bible, God gives us so many warnings so that we might follow His Way for eternal salvation. Are we listening to His warnings and becoming loving obedient children of God?! We need to grow in obedient faith in the Lord who can save us. The only way we can become loving obedient children of God is through “PRAYER”! We need to make time to pray to God from and with our heart. Jesus, our loving God, help us learn how to pray in love with an open heart and mind!

My Soul, Be Grateful for the Gift of Salvation!

My soul, be grateful for the gift of Salvation!

Receive it with an open heart!

Welcome it with palm branches!

Embrace it with all your strength, my soul!

Learn from the Bridegroom about humility!

Let the Lamb teach you about obedience, my soul!

Let the Sun of Justice shine over you for purification!

Receive the radiance of the Sun

and walk faithfully in the Sunshine!

Be grateful for the gift of Salvation, my soul!



By Father Joseph Mary Paek, OSB

