

COMMUNICATING HOPE

Dear friends. The first thing that comes to mind about communicating hope is that we must have hope to communicate in the first place. All the modern means and tools of communication are at the service of the message we possess and the hope the Church has to offer. If the tools we have to communicate are super-efficient but if our message of hope is weak and unconvincing, then we will not be effective communicators of hope. So, what is the source of the hope we have? It is that Christ is risen from the dead and his truth has risen with him. And because this is true, his love is the most powerful force in the universe. Here I would like to share with you four features of the hope that impels us to share the hope of Easter that we celebrate in these days.

First, the hope that each of us has personally. I am here this morning not just to talk about hope but as a witness to hope. The late Pope Benedict XVI said that the one who hopes lives differently. I often imagine what my life would be like without hope, and it is frightening. The hope I have going forward is based on what I have known from my life's journey so far – that God is present and active in all the events of life and although hope does not save us from bad things that might happen, it guarantees that when they do, God still works all things for the good of those who love Him (Cf. Rom. 8:28).

The second feature of hope is that like faith, it must be shared. In the words of Pope Francis in his message for the '*World Day of Social Communications*', 'hope is always a community project'. Like faith, hope is shared with attentiveness to another person's deepest need for love, care and healing. Here is the hope that does disappoint for it is based on the power of Christ's love that overcomes all things and from which nothing can separate us. Communicating hope is proclaiming God's saving power in the present moment but in a way that anticipates the future.

The third feature of hope is the liturgical. Every liturgy is a celebration of hope. At the Eucharist after the 'Our Father', we pray 'as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Because of the celebration of the Mass, there ought to be an outward propulsion of missionary zeal in the congregation to return to our homes, friends, schools and places of work with a new energy and a hope to communicate.

The fourth challenge is to communicate hope to the culture. Western culture in particular is in a state of flux leading to confusion and the de-stabilization of society. The Catholic response must always be to evangelize the culture, to participate in public affairs and re-lay the foundations of a just and stable society. This involves the celebration of all in the culture that is good and true while calling out aspects of our culture that are bad and false, damaging the common good. A communicator of hope critiques culture, proclaiming the vision of the Gospel that offers greater promise and a better way. We do this with gentleness, always with a spirit of charity but yet with a desire to seek the truth and live it. This means that the hope we burn to communicate will take us out into the *areopagi* of politics, science, law, economics and the great digital sea of social media.

To conclude. In his First Letter to the Christians living in Asia Minor, St Peter asked them to: 'Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands a reason for the hope that is in you' (1 Peter 3:15). It has been a privilege to share with you a few reasons why I have hope for the future and why you should too.

I will leave you with a prayer from the great St Columbanus who brought hope to thousands in the Dark Ages when he said:

'I hope that he will choose to wake me from slumber. I hope that he will set me on fire with the flame of his divine love, the flame that burns above the stars, so that I am filled with desire for his love and his fire burns always within me!' (St Columbanus, From Office of Readings, Tues. 28th Week OT).

May this same hope also awaken us to be pilgrims of hope, witnesses of hope and communicators of the hope that is badly need for our world today!

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