



In the Two Hearts

*Scattering the seeds of Hope *** from the Cross*

twohearts1@mac.com

48765 Annapolis Rd. Hopedale, OH 43976

www.heartsofjesusandmary.com

(740) 946-9000

THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS AND THE GIFT OF HOPE

“...only this kind of hope can give the courage to act and to persevere.”

Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical on hope offers us, once again, an insight into the mystery of the cross *and* the hope that enables us to embrace our own:

Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey. (Spe Salvi 1)

What is this ‘present, arduous journey’ but ‘the cross’? Certainly we can recognize in our lives, right now, the heavy burden—whether it is financial concern, poor health, concern for loved ones, or even the heavy burden of our own sinfulness and its consequences. The importance, therefore, of discovering that “trustworthy hope” becomes more evident. To put it in the form of a question: What is the goal, the hope, which will strengthen us to embrace our cross?

LOVE GIVES IT MEANING

Once again we look to our modern apostle of hope, our Holy Father:

Only the great certitude of hope that my own life, and history in general, despite all failures are held firm by the indestructible power of Love, and that this gives them their meaning and importance, only this kind of hope can give the courage to act and to persevere. (Spe Salvi 35)



It is Love—the Love of God for me personally and for every person—that becomes the strength I need to endure, to accept and even to embrace that which causes me to suffer. It is by His death on the Cross that God has revealed this Love. When we look with the eyes of faith upon the Cross and we see Jesus saving us, loving us; we can then turn with the same eyes of faith and see also within our own lives that our cross is a gift of love. Within our cross we can discover Jesus’ Love; Jesus saving us; Jesus drawing us closer to Himself; Jesus allowing us to know—through the intimate knowledge of experience—that we need Him, we need our Savior.

This then is our HOPE: He is HERE. We need Him and He is here . . . *for us*. He loves us. He will help us. He has proven His

love. He is all-powerful and He wants to help us. Knowing this, believing this, what can we not face? We are not alone. Jesus’ love will provide for all our needs. I do not have to rely upon myself anymore; Jesus is God and He has set me free! I do not have to rely on my own plans, my own ways, my own strength, my own understanding. Suffering has shown me that all of these are fleeting and unreliable. Jesus is God and He will care for me and aid me in all my struggles and sufferings. By His great Love, Jesus will even turn my sufferings into JOY! The joy of knowing that I am loved deeply by One Who is so good; One Who is present to me in the midst of my pain. Jesus Himself has already taken on my pain so that I may find Him and His strength there waiting for me. When I embrace the cross I am embracing the One who is upon it.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

Our very natural tendency is to run from the cross—we don’t like to suffer. But if we can learn through faith to discover the Gift hidden within the pain, our burden will be lightened. We will not feel so heavily the weight of the cross because we will not be carrying it on our own. Jesus is with us. We will hear His Voice speaking to us. Even though our human nature may feel swamped by the waves and winds of suffering, and our little ‘boat’ may threaten to capsize, we will hear Him say, “Take courage, it is I! Do not be afraid!” And He will come into our boat, take His seat on the throne of our heart and bring peace to the storm around and within us. That is the *joy* and the *hope* of the Cross.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY JUST ONE DOLLAR FOR AFRICA!



In December 2002 United Nations World Food Program launched the "Africa Hunger Alert Campaign" to draw international attention to the "unprecedented hunger crisis gripping the African continent." The campaign stated that 38 million Africans were facing starvation and death due to droughts, famines, floods, political turmoil and the AIDS epidemic. Most gravely in need, we discovered, were the innumerable children — orphaned by victims of the deadly HIV virus. The death of their parents left groups of children abandoned with no one to care for them. Some had grandparents who could struggle to provide, but most ran in packs, tragically surviving and roaming like wild animals.

We as an Order could not ignore this plea from the Two Hearts to care for Their little ones. On Ash Wednesday of 2003, we began the "Just One Dollar for Africa" campaign. Br. Francis and Dr. Mark Miravalle (head of the external members of the Order) traveled to Africa to establish contact with, and commitments from, various religious organizations who promised to use every dollar we sent directly for the starving and the orphans to whom they ministered. We in turn could then promise anyone who donated to "Just One Dollar" that every penny of every dollar they give would become food and care for our starving and orphaned brothers and sisters in Africa. In order to provide for administrative costs we have received donations from various individuals for that specific purpose, so that the rest of the donors could know for certain that their offerings were directly fulfilling our Lord's words, "I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me drink, naked and you clothed me."

CONTEMPLATING THE CROSS . . . *(reflections from our members)*

"It's only my cross!"

I remember clearly how, soon after my mom was diagnosed with colon cancer, we went over to the house of some family friends for a Christmas celebration. As these friends haltingly tried to express their sympathy, my mom said in all simplicity, and even with joy, "It's only my cross!" Her point was that each of us has a cross to carry, and this was the one the Lord had given her at this time. She trusted that He would give her the grace needed to carry this cross, and that a true resurrection would ensue. It was God's perfect plan that she be taken Home to Heaven, nine months after being diagnosed with cancer, but not before leaving us with her great example of being a true follower of our Lord Jesus by embracing the cross He offered to her.



Standing with the Mother

Pondering the mystery of the cross, I take to heart the words Mother Teresa of Calcutta: "With great love and trust stand with Our Lady near the cross." Also, Father Brian, co-founder of the MC Fathers, describing Mother Teresa's relationship with Our Lady said: "With out an intimate relationship with Our Lady, the command to pick up our cross daily and follow the Lord will prove too difficult and demanding."

Union with the Crucified

A few weeks ago, at one of the nursing homes that our members regularly visit, I went to the unit for patients with varying mental illnesses to spend some time with them. I sat in a chair next to a black

woman. "Hello Harriet, how are you today?"

She looked at me and tried to smile but tears filled her eyes. I took her hand. "Are you alright? Is something wrong?" "Yes" she said, "but I'm not sure what... I am so confused. I don't know what's happening. I don't understand why I'm here, and why they don't let me out. I'm alone and afraid all the time. But Jesus is with me, and I pray to Him, pray to Him every moment of the day and pray to Him at night. I'll be all right. He's with me". With every word she spoke, she cried more and more, and yet there was a calm certainty in her tone.

Later, thinking back on that visit and what she had said during it, I was reminded of a conversation I once had with a religious who often experienced deep interior suffering and desolation. He said, "When you are suffering so much that you feel God is far away and that you are abandoned, say 'Now I have you, my Jesus... now we are so closely united, I cannot even perceive you. We're no longer two, but one'". Through this practice I've learned one of the most astounding paradoxes in the mystery of suffering - when you feel abandoned by God is when you are most profoundly united with Jesus on the Cross.



Pathway to the Heart of God

Suffering is the greatest pathway to the Heart of God. When it comes my way I can either get focused inward and loose myself in the hatred, anger, revenge or I can look outside and offer it for those who are hurting me, or for souls. It is also a good way to focus on God because the little things that I thought were important seem to disappear in the face of the pain, only what is really valuable remains. It becomes a path to Him.