In New Encyclical, Pope Offers Hope to the World

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"It would be like plunging into the ocean of infinite love, a moment in which time — the before and after — no longer exists," he said. This is how to understand the object of Christian hope, he said.

The encyclical’s main section examined how the emphasis on reason and freedom — embodied in the French Revolution — sought to destroy the Christian notion that Redemption was possible through political programs, and religious faith was dismissed as irrelevant and relegated to a private sphere.

While praising Karl Marx for his great analytical skill, the pope said Marx made a fundamental error in forgetting that human freedom always includes "freedom for evil," which is not neutralized by social structures.

In the same way, the pope said, those who believe man can be "redeemed" through science and technological advances are mistaken.

"Science can contribute greatly to making the world and mankind more human. Yet it can also destroy mankind and the world unless it is steered by forces that lie outside it," he said.

The pope said that while Christians have a responsibility to work for justice, the hope of building a perfect world here and now is illusory. "Hope in this world cannot be sustained by themselves alone. It has to be faced up to by God," he said.

"We need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only come from God," he said.

Learning Hope

The second half of the encyclical discusses how Christian hope can be learned and practiced — particularly through prayer, acceptance of suffering and a sharing of divine judgment.

The pope called prayer a "school of hope," and as an example he cited the late Vietnamese Cardinal Francois Nguyen Van Thuan, who spent 13 years in prison, nine of them in solitary confinement.

In this "situation of seemingly utter hopelessness," the fact, he said, that he could still listen and speak to God gave him a new understanding of hope.

"The pope recalled that in the not-too-distant past, many Christians found "the breaking of down being equal," he said, "When we have that... in the, in the, in the, in the, in the, in the hope, the hope," he said.

The pope said that in the need to do something which can help others, he said: "We are not going to stay outside history and withdraw the our own private corner of happiness," he said.


"When we pray properly we undergo a process of inner purification which opens us up to God and thus to our fellow human beings as well," he said.

"Being part of human existence, and the sufferings of the innocent appear to be increasing today, the pope said. He said Christians should do whatever they can to reduce pain and distress.

Yet suffering cannot be banished from this world, and trying to avoid anything that might involve pain can lead to a life of emptiness, he said. Instead, Christians are called to suffer with and for others, and their capacity to do so depends on their strength of inner hope, he said.

"The saints were able to make the great journey of human existence in the way that Christ had done before them, because they were bringing with them, great hope," he said.

The pope recalled that in the not-too-distant past, many Christians found "they were being turned with great hope," he said.

The pope said the idea of judgment — specifically the Last Judgment of the living and the dead — touched strongly on Christian hope because it promises justice.

"I am convinced that the question of justice constitutes the essential argument, or in any case the strongest argument, in favor of faith in eternal life," he said.

"It is impossible for the Christian to believe that the injustices of history will be the final word, he said. The Last Judgment should not evolve terror, however, but a sense of responsibility, the pope said. It is a moment of hope, because it combines God's justice and God's grace — but grace does not cancel out justice," he said.

"Grace is not a sponge which wipes everything away, so that whatever someone has done on earth ends up being of equal value," he said. "Evil deeds, in the end, do not sit at table at the eternal banquet beside their victims without distinction, as though nothing had happened."

"The pope said the idea of purgatory, as a place of atonement for sins, also has a place in the logic of Christian hope. Heaven is for the "utterly pure and hell for those who have destroyed all desire for truth and love, and not the" other is normal in human life," he said.

Thus, the souls of many departed may benefit from prayers, he said.

With her conversion, St. Bakhita found the "great hope" that liberated and redeemed her, the pope said.

"The pope emphasized that this was different from political liberation as a slave. Christianity "did not bring a message of social revolution," he said, but something totally different: an encounter with "a hope stronger than the sufferings of slavery, a hope which therefore transformed life and the world from within."

Encyclical on the Web

To read the full text of "Spe Salvi," Pope Benedict XVI's new encyclical, go to http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html

Encyclical at a Glance

* Jesus Christ brought humanity the gift of a "trustworthy hope" in salvation and eternal life, a hope that is directly connected with faith.
* In the contemporary world, however, religious faith has been replaced with faith in progress and technology, provoking a "crisis of Christian hope."
* Ideologies like Marxism tried to do without religion and create a perfect society through political structures. Instead, this led to the "greatest forms of cruelty," proving that a "world which has to create its own justice in the absence of any order, can be a haven of justice, order and salvation just as nothing had happened."

"Some have placed their hope in the mistaken belief that man could be redeemed through science — but science can destroy the world; only God can save it," he said.

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio has placed a Queene pastor on administrative leave from priestly ministry after receiving allegations of sexual abuse placed on the diocese's telephone reporting line.

The bishop said that Msgr. George F. Zatarga, the pastor of St. Monica Parish, Bayside, since 2005, acknowledged the inappropriate behavior. He also wrote a letter resigning his pastorate and agreed with the archdiocese's request for no further contact with anyone involved with the allegations involved any members of this parish.

Msgr. John W. Maloney, the territorial vicar for the Queens Deanery, presented the letter to the four weekend Masses as the representative of the bishop.

When the diocese learned of the allegations, the information was immediately given to the District Attorney's Office of Kings County, "following our standard procedure," the bishop's letter said.

Bishop DiMarzio said that as a priest on administrative leave Msgr. Zatarga is not permitted to present himself as a priest, wear clerical attire, celebrate Mass publicly or administer the sacraments. He is allowed to offer Mass privately.

After the Masses, Dominican Sister Ellen Patricia Finn, the Viaducts Assistant Coordinator, and eight members of the diocesan Healing/Intervention Team were available to parishioners to hear their "thoughts and concerns" about the news presented in the letter.

A number of parishioners spoke with the team, she said.

"For the Masses, the priest of St. Monica, Father Zatarga, was named as the pastor until a new pastor is appointed. He assumed his duties this week." In his letter, Bishop DiMarzio said that anyone wishing to present an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by clergy should call the toll-free reporting number (888) 634-4499. He said the caller would be treated "with courtesy and respect."