

Deep hope for weary people

Chatham Mission

Dec. 2-4, 2023.

Weekend Homily: *What gives me sparks of hope in 2023?*

A. Hope in a weary world

- at age 83, many empires have fallen after 1940:
 - 1945: German & Japanese/1989: Soviet Union/
 - fading colonial empires: British/French/Spanish/Belgian/Dutch
 - democracy under threat: USA/Britain/European Union/Africa/etc.
- “In the Old Testament, the only social institution directly created by God is marriage.”(Rahner)
- “In the New Testament, the only social institution directly created by God is the Church.

(M.P.)

- The Church will survive, *but* Jesus never said where!
- overall constant: *things can change, and often for the better.*

B. Four signs of hopeful changes for me

1. The Church: Vatican II (1963-65) and Popes in my life

- my pre-Vatican II life: Sunday Mass/altar server/prayers/catechism/school
- who would have ever thought? Mass in vernacular/lay ministers of communion/mass in a bedroom/go to a Protestant church/women in ministry/ecumenism [mixed marriages in the church building]/burials in cemeteries/freedom of conscience/read the bible/women teachers in seminary/permanent deacons/social justice
- seven popes in my life: Pius XII, St. John XXIII, St. Paul VI, John Paul I, St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis
 - outstanding/amazing changes/development of doctrine (capital punishment)
 - Church now out front re. environment: Pope Francis: *Laudato ‘Si/Laudato Deum* documents: “from kindergarten to Ph.D.”!
- new women “Doctors of the Church”: St. Teresa of Avila and St. Catherine of Siena (1970, Pope St. Paul VI), St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1997, Pope St. John Paul II), St. Hildegard of Bingen (2012, Pope Benedict XVI)/part of legitimate new openness to women today
- Pope Francis and the Synod: prayer/listen/discern/new model for church structure (meetings)
- The Holy Spirit is full of fresh initiatives full of hope: so stay awake (Gospel): not done yet!

2. Marriage and Family

- lots of divorces, family breakups, sexual violence and abuse, espec. re. clergy and others: sad
- hope from Louis and Emily Prieur family: 11/14 children: 50th anniv./cousins: 17 “golds” + moi: 58 yrs. ordained +
- hope for me: a newborn child/
- care for the handicapped: cultural change in last 30 years.
- marriage and family will survive (immigration in Canada: having larger families)

3. God often works most powerfully in a crisis

- crisis: [Greek: *krisis*]: danger or opportunity/ St. Paul: when weakest, strongest/cross
- pandemic: Covid-19: time: fast/no Christmas, Easter, Holy Week together as family/
- BUT: tons of new creativity evolved: nursing homes/work world [Zoom]/young people pitching in/writing Memoirs/

- fresh ideas to find peace: “Artists’ Day”/new desire for silence/morning/evening
- discovery for prayer: “Morning Knowledge” (big picture) and “Evening Knowledge” (little picture) (St. Aug.) (daily examen)/ “Silence is the language of God”
- also, nature can bring us peace: 5 minutes of listening to birds in morning = 6 hrs. of endorphin uplift!

Hope for me: crises, sufferings, difficulties often provide fresh idea, hopes, peace and joy!

4. New awareness of power of death, resurrection and Eucharist

- pandemic: missed community gatherings/tears on receiving communion/
- world wars/changes/seeing with fresh eyes: “Not what you look at that matters, but what you see”; cancer patients/injuries/para-Olympics/
- God is present with us in our sufferings: Icon: Descent to the Dead
- simple ways to give hope: cashier wearing a cross/mother with a baby in a carriage
- The Eucharist: new appreciation of what is actually happening in Eucharist (to overcome so many who do not believe in the Real Presence)

C. Our Mission Talks

D. Bookmark of St. Teresa of Avila