

MARY BEARER OF HOPE



In this time of Advent which is coming to an end, we have been continually invited to strengthen our hope. When we speak of hope in this liturgical time and after the catechesis that Pope Francis has given this year, we run the risk of repeating ideas and perhaps not bringing anything new.

But in reality it is not about having new or brilliant ideas about hope, but about becoming aware and seeing, how we are living hope in our daily lives; a virtue which is so essential for each one of us, for the church and the world.

Hope is the word that resonates most in us when we speak of Advent and the person who profoundly incarnates it in her life is Mary. Her unquenchable faith which enables her to say: *“let it be done unto me according to your Word”* inspires our Christian faith. Mary converts her time of waiting into a time of hope for all of humanity.

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The generous, available and unconditional yes of Mary, which is born from faith, engenders hope and love and enables her to completely trust the promises of God. In Mary’s waiting, the hope of the people of Yahweh is encapsulated. This faith filled and hopeful response of Mary, so deeply inserted in the story of her people and of all of humanity, is lived by her as a journey founded on hope of salvation from God.

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Mary's YES and that of our Founders, is a challenge for us. All that which we are living in the world, the church and the Congregation, needs to be looked at, understood and assumed in hope. It is not a theoretical hope, but an incarnate hope like that of Mary.

Our world is surrounded by a crisis which is widespread at all levels: political, economic, social, ecological, institutional... Faced with the abundance of difficulties, we run the risk of living in a disorientated, insecure, hopeless way with certain fear of facing the future. At times, the image of the future that is presented to us at world level, can be uncertain or not very encouraging. It might seem that, instead of desiring the future, we are afraid of it and what is worse can end up in indifference, pessimism, meaninglessness...

We are also living changes in the Congregation, where fears, doubts, worries, uncertainty, questions have arisen; but where there has also been anticipation, trust, optimism, hope... When we draw close to the Word of God, we recognize that the questions, challenges, doubts arise from life itself. The Gospel is full of questions, and in it there also appear fears, doubts, answers... Jesus is a specialist in asking questions which enlighten us on an interior level, and makes us seek sincere answers.

In this time of Advent, where the liturgy invites us to live joyful hope and reminds us that Jesus continues to be born every day, it is worthwhile to ask ourselves, what is my hope like? What reasons can I give for living it joyfully? Mary, bearer of hope, can help, encourage and accompany us as we live this virtue which is very necessary for each one of us, for the Congregation and for today's world.

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Article no. 3 of our Constitutions says: *"In our radical following of Christ, Mary his Mother, model of faith in that Love, precedes and accompanies us so that we can enter fully into the mission of her Son."* Mary's faith enables her to make a generous leap of acceptance of the will of God. She trusts totally in Him, even though her reason does not understand what God is asking of her.

Mary is not a woman who gets depressed before the uncertainties which life presents her with; she is a woman who listens, who accepts the reality as it presents itself, with its clear days and its grey days; her daily "Fiat", feeds and strengthens her faith and her hope.

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Mary's response *"Let it be done unto me according to your Word"*, reveals her total availability to the Plan of God, which will lead her on paths that are often disconcerting, bringing her to the foot of the Cross. When everyone abandons Jesus on the Cross, she is there, in obscurity, standing by. In addition, she is there because of her fidelity to the Plan of God, because she has hope that this is not the end, but the beginning of something great.

At this time in which we are all involved in the drawing up of the Pastoral Plan of the Congregation (PAC), let us allow ourselves to be accompanied by Mary, bearer of hope, so that we can discover with her, where the Lord, wants to bring us, so that we can continue to be witness of the love and

compassion of God. We need to awaken within us, trust in God and the joy of knowing ourselves to be loved, called and summoned by Him, to generate life and hope, like Mary.

This Christmas, may the Child of Bethlehem, the light of all peoples, the hope of the poor and the simple, fill our hearts with renewed hope and teach us to live like Mary, in abandonment to the compassionate love of God.

***“To each sister and community I send you my heartfelt wishes for a
Happy Christmas”***