



Christian hope and care for the present Spirit of initiative (Fr. Gustavo Cavagnari. 21/05/21. Salesian Family Council)

Christian hope is the fruitful and leavening force of caring for the present, of giving in service, of taking charge of others, of cultivating the conditions that make life livable and fruitful. Those who have evangelical hope inhabit, shape and transform daily existence. *"The Church teaches that a hope related to the end of time does not diminish the importance of intervening duties, but rather undergirds the acquittal of them with fresh incentives»* (GS, 21).

In practice, Christian hope unfolds **in three stages**: *reading and interpreting* the signs of hope present in the world, *offering horizons* of meaning that open to hope, and *engaging in concrete* attitudes and behaviors that sustain hope.

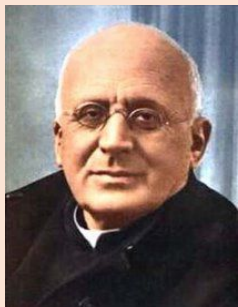
First of all, those who have Christian hope see and enjoy the countless number of seeds and concrete fruits of hope that are at work in the most diverse spheres and subjects, including in the most disadvantaged and suffering realities and events of ordinary life. *"The hopes of people today, especially of all those who suffer, are also the hopes of Christ's disciples, proclaimed Vatican II"* (GS, 1). They see them in the many men and women who, *«busy at work in their daily life and activity, oftentimes far from view and quite unclaimed by the world, unknown to the world's great personages but nonetheless looked upon in love by the Father, untiring labourers who work in the Lord's vineyard. Confident and steadfast through the power of God's grace, these are the humble yet great builders of the Kingdom of God in history»* (CF,17). They see them in the saints *"next door"* who go forward with patience and *"struggling with hope"*. Especially in these times of pandemic, they see them in those who, instead of *"fleeing in the hope of saving themselves"*, remain and commit themselves *"with effort and sacrifice"* so that the situation will be less bitter.

Humanly speaking, hope is not an object that is held and can be given. Rather, it is an exercise that *each person* must do starting from the discovery of horizons that keep him or her in tension, and despite the risk or deception. And yet, there is a need for *witnesses* who can in some way *indicate* a path, *show* certainty, *allow* the presence of the One who is one's hope *to shine through* (1 Tim 1:1) and *strengthen* the sense of entrustment to his providence. Those who have Christian hope, therefore, share those *reasons for living* that move them and give them direction, and which can perhaps open up in others breaches through which the Spirit can sow a *firmer hope*.

Finally, those who have Christian hope *commit* themselves to concrete actions and conduct, the being is to *be close* to others. The story of the *"desperate men of Emmaus"* teaches us that in order to set out again *«without delay»* (Lk 24:33), the two disciples had to recognise in a new light (cf. Lk 24:31) what they had previously known inexplicably, without understanding its meaning (cf. Lk 24:25). Also, that in order to re-understand in a new way the meaning of what had happened, they also needed a traveller to *stay* with them, to *offer* them a new horizon of interpretation, to *convert* their minds, to *heal* them of disappointment and to *warm* their wounded hearts. Especially in the despair that comes from loneliness – physical, social, affective but also spiritual – or from the suffering and bewilderment it causes, *'being-with'* can be experienced as a presence that remains, a welcoming that heals, a closeness that comforts, a relationship that knits fragments together, an affection that reconnects. In situations of confusion, discomfort, abandonment... the desire to be there calls for the choice to invest in relationships as a concrete way of sustaining hope beyond material needs.

But this is not enough. Implementing hope entails the responsibility of *taking charge* of concrete situations and striving to bring them more and more in line with God's plan. *«From our actions springs hope for us and for others»*. Starting from being present and knowing how to welcome, teaching the uninformed, caring for the sick, helping the poor, sheltering the abandoned, visiting the lonely or protecting the elderly can be seedbeds in which hope can be born. In this sense, *charity verifies the hope that faith generates*. The facts, even though they may start from simple realities, are capable of piercing the absence of hope and, moreover, of provoking attention, generating other actions, multiplying changes.

Further still. If Christian hope is *actively* exercised through charity and concern for one's neighbour, it is also exercised *passively* through patience and endurance. *Patience*, because if the believer is certain that God fulfils his promises and that his Kingdom is already at work in our midst (cf. Lk 17:21), he also knows that he is living in the *not yet*, and therefore refuses the temptation to find security in possessions that one does not know when they will be taken from him (cf. Lk 12:20). *Resistance*, because we live in a context that suppresses hope, many times nipping it in the bud and not echoing positive things. Usually, what a person dreams of and plans ahead is quickly resisted or questioned, almost always downwards. Think of young people and of the sharp talk to which they have to adjust rather than dream. Think of those who take on a responsibility with novelty and freshness and all the steps they have to climb to reach their goal. Think of those who try to breathe enthusiasm into life and are slapped down by the *"that's what there is"* or *"what can you do?"* of the well-worn and resigned.



Thoughts by Don Rinaldi (QC, June 1921)

- ❖ With the month of Mary just ended, we prepared ourselves to draw near to Jesus: "*Ad Jessum per Mariam*". At the end of this month, we are more ready to move into the Heart of Jesus.
- ❖ Don Bosco urged us to bring souls to Jesus. Mary continued to send the people to the feet of Jesus: "*Do whatever he tells you*".
- ❖ Jesus manifests his love to us, giving us all the Good things of life... To reciprocate Jesus' great love in some way, try to listen to him and follow his invitation: "*Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart*".
- ❖ The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is manifested by practicing meekness in all your external appearance, in your words, in your manner, in every action... Meekness is the true charity.
- ❖ The practice of meekness requires a spirit of sacrifice, a great deal of patience, keeping yourself quiet, restraining the urges of the soul, never allowing yourself to be moved and transcend in fits and starts, always keeping yourself good.
- ❖ Study to be meek, for the Lord wants it, with the reward that you will be masters of hearts. But without humility you will not succeed.
- ❖ Humility consists in being convinced that all we have is given by God, that nothing can be done or said by us; the stirrings of the soul, the thoughts, the movements, are gifts from the Lord. This recognition of our nothingness is humility.
- ❖ The Lord has renounced everything; Under the appearance of a Host, He hides His power, His greatness, and everything that is of God; He allows Himself to be carried, despised, trampled upon, treated according to the wishes of men: this is the true humility of the Lord.
- ❖ If you possess this ground of true humility in your heart, it is easy to be meek, to deal well with everyone and to follow the teaching and example of Jesus.

World Council of the Salesian Family

It is the meeting of the World Leaders of the 32 groups of the Salesian Family with the Rector Major as Don Bosco's successor and centre of unity of the whole Family. It took place on 21, 22 and 23 May. The main topic was a deepening of the strenna "Hope moves us. I make all things new". We were accompanied by a valuable presentation by Fr Gustavo Cavagnari, a Salesian and professor at UPS: "HOPE AND CARE OF THE PRESENT", a summary of which can be found on the previous page. The whole presentation is worth reflecting on. It offers a good approach to addressing our times from an attitude of faith.

The Pope's appreciation for the Salesian Family

The Holy Father's reference to the Salesian Family during the Angelus on Pentecost Sunday was beautiful. He said: "And speaking of tomorrow's feast, Mary Help of Christians, a thought for the Salesians, who work so much, so much in the Church for the most distant, for the most marginalized, for youth. May the Lord bless them and bring them forward with many holy vocations!". His words urge us to grow further in our love for Our Lady and in our care for those most in need and those who are far from the faith.

The Provincial and Local Councils of the Salesian Family

The vitality of the Salesian Family is perceived first of all in the territory, whether provincial or local. Certain bodies are necessary for its correct animation and accompaniment. Within the Salesian Family they are called "councils". They express in an institutional manner the charismatic unity of the various groups existing in the territory, whether provincial or local. They represent the favourable space for promoting communion among them and for ensuring the development of the Salesian charism. It is the privileged meeting place for dialogue and common reflection. It becomes an effective tool for planning and reviewing common initiatives, and a means of strengthening the vocations pastoral ministry and the pastoral action of each of the groups. They are convoked by the SDB Provincial (or his delegate). Among others, the leaders of the different groups of the SF present in the territory take part. The VDBs and the CDBs are also represented.

Appointment of VDB and CDB Assistants

VDBs and CDBs are consecrated, with the same vows as Salesians or Salesian sisters. The accompaniment of the ecclesiastical assistant in the process of formation and maturity as a consecrated person is absolutely necessary. The appointment corresponds to the Provincial at the request of the Local Leaders (in the case of constituted groups) or at the request of the Head of the World Council (in the case of presences dependent on the Centre).