

November 2, 2018

This week I would like to focus on hope. Let me begin by quoting Desmond Tutu who said, "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." I am aware there is much darkness in our world and like Bishop Tutu, I choose to search out the light and I want to encourage you to do the same today. Anne Frank once said, "I don't think of all the misery but of the beauty that remains." I am convinced that we need to search out the beauty in life because the misery will always present itself boldly. In order to be happy or at least at peace with oneself one has to search out and appreciate the beauty around them. Some of what I'm talking about today is about a particular attitude of gratitude. Emily Dickinson once said, "I dwell in possibility." I have come to believe that a permanent focus on prayerful possibilities is helpful in seeing the world in all its light and beauty.

Dr Martin Luther King Jr. once wrote, "Carve a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment." I know that this sounds like hard work and it is. I believe that we can stand at one end or another of the mountain and remain disappointed, disillusioned or dismayed or we can choose to make our way through difficult experiences with the determination to find new and exciting possibilities once we pass through the present experience.

There is a wonderful English proverb written many years ago that says "The darkest hours are just before the dawn." For those of us who don't sleep as well as we used to, indeed we find ourselves at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning processing the day before and planning for the day ahead, it's good to remember that there are new prayerful possibilities with each new day. I think Theodore Roosevelt had some insight when he said, "When you are at the end of your rope, tie a knot and hold on." Sometimes we need to just keep keeping on. There are moments that we just need to hold on and wait for the circumstances around us to change. That doesn't mean we are oblivious to our own circumstances but rather we are active in prayer for God to make the changes that will alter our circumstances.

Barbara Kings Oliver once wrote, "Hope is a renewable option – if you run out of it at the end of the day, you get to start over in the morning." For me this has been one of God's gifts. To start every morning by spending some time in a journal and setting the goals for the new day. Not other's goals, mine. To set the priorities that I believe God will bless for each new day is the gift I give to myself while drinking my 1st cup of coffee. Sometimes it's the most productive hour of the day. How do you enjoy God's blessings in the 1st hour of the day? Are you deliberate about re-establishing hope?

Nelson Mandela once wrote, "May your choices reflect your hopes not your fears." Let me share that I am convinced that many people function out of fear. I think our society is in a time of profound fear. And I think we often get caught up in what the media has to say about the future. I believe that the future is in God's hands and that we are invited to work with God to make a better future. The making of that future is in our daily choices. We actually have much more influence than we think we do. Soren Kierkegaard once said, "Hope is passion for what is possible." I'm not sure that we fully recognize the devastating power of complacency. We live in a world where everything that we say and do could matter. We need to speak and act with passion and compassion in every situation.

I appreciate the words of Helen Keller who once wrote, "Keep your face to the sun and you will never see the shadows." I don't believe that we need to ignore the shadows, but I do believe we need to decide where our focus will be. The truth is it depends on how we choose to spell sun or Son. Jesus Christ is at the centre of our experience. Even in the darkest moments of life and grief, Christ is in the midst of it all and wants to bring new life. (John 11:32-44).

Dale Carnegie once wrote, "Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all." So my closing thought to you today is never give up – keep on hoping.

Blessings
Fr Stephen