

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2025C

Faith, hope, and charity. When you were baptized, no matter how remote or how recent, you received those three gifts that are helping you to this day, and every day of your Christian life. Catholic tradition calls them the infused theological virtues, ***because they are given to us directly by God, to make us more like God.*** They dwell within us always, resources ready to hand when we need them: faith, to help us know truth that goes beyond the human knowledge we can gain on our own; hope, which reaches out for the good that is not yet but will certainly be; and charity, to help us imitate God, Who is Love. The virtues can lie dormant at times, or seem overwhelmed by our distractions and burdens; but they remain with us, a life-long source of strength.

That's the theology, admittedly abstract. But the other day I ran across an article connected to this Jubilee Year, about a work by the French author, Charles Peguy. He wrote a poem in 1912 called ***The Portal of the Mystery of Hope***. In a striking way, Peguy personifies Faith and Charity as something like the ideal devoted mother – mature, wise, compassionate, always guiding and giving what is needed for her child to grow and learn and have good things. ***But Hope, he says, is more like a little child*** – uninhibited, free, enthusiastic, always seeing new possibilities, running on ahead and dashing off to explore the world in wonder and expectation. A child will find delight in things that seem to adults to be trivial or pointless. As adults we are always going somewhere, accomplishing something – even our leisure becomes serious business requiring careful planning, investment, and scheduling. ***But a child can be entertained by a puddle, a flower, an ant, a blank piece of paper.***

The boundless enthusiasm of Hope needs the guidance of faith and charity if it is to lead reliably to God; but faith and charity need Hope to remain relevant, alive, truly joyful with the very joy of Jesus. As Peguy says, this is part of why Christ tells us we must become like children to enter the Kingdom of God – with a child's irrepressible confidence and sense of purpose even in play that everything matters for its own sake, not for some use we can make of it and then discard. In a powerful phrase, Peguy say children

naturally have the advantage over the rest of us because ***“they have not yet been defeated”*** – not yet overcome by the sense of failure or regret or fear or weariness that weigh so heavily on us as we get older and experience the brokenness of the human condition. Children reflect the goodness and innocence that sadly do not last, ***but which are always capable of being renewed by the love of God.***

Many in our world feel the absence of God, a root of hopelessness that has many branches of human sorrows and sufferings. But these Scriptures remind us that without the confidence and assurance that hope brings, even the presence of God can overwhelm us with fear and anxiety, as it did Isaiah - “Woe is me, I am doomed!” – or St. Peter – “Leave me, Lord, I am a sinful man!” – or St. Paul, who felt unfit to be an Apostle. ***But God’s power does not manifest itself to overwhelm us with fear but to assure us with love and mercy, and then sends us into the world with those gifts. Today, think of your Amen as you come to Communion with the words of Isaiah: Here I am, send me!***

The Hope that comes from God will not be defeated. The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes words Julian of Norwich heard in a vision from Jesus: ***“all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.”*** That is the voice of Hope – childlike in its persevering trust in God, but never childish or nonsense. Hope is God’s gift to you, ***ever reaching out for the good that is not yet, but for certain will be.***