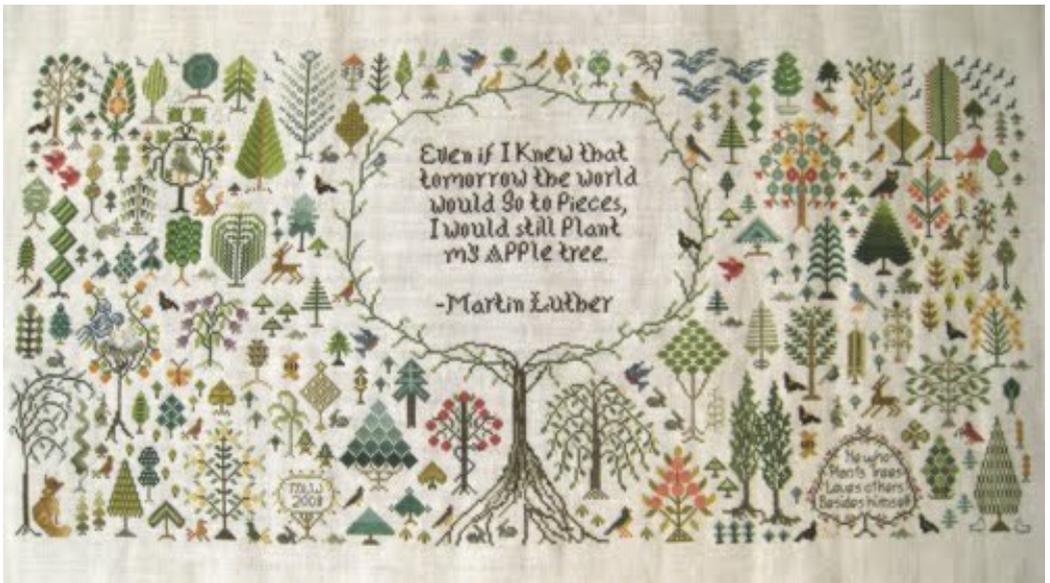


The Pilgrims of St Francis

The Annual theme 2019/20:-

Christian Hope



Written by Pedro A Sanz

*'Even if I knew that the world will disintegrate tomorrow,
I would plant my apple tree anyway'.
(Martin Luther 1483 - 1546)*

*'Utopia is the daughter of hope.
And hope is the DNA of the human race.
They can take away everything but faithful hope, as I say
in a poem.
Now, it must be a credible hope,
active, justifiable and acting.'
(Pedro Casaldáliga)*

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This booklet is intended as a starting point for the ongoing discussions of the year. The ideas put forward do not necessarily reflect the opinions of those who are part of the movement 'Pilgrims of St Francis'.

*Further copies can be obtained by printing it from our website
http://www.cdsf.org/spip/article.php?id_article=342*

*or by sending a S.A.E. to Sheana Barby 2 Margaret St. Derby
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1 Despair and Discouragement

This theme, 'Christian hope', was proposed by the Pilgrims of Saint Francis in Sweden. On 31 August, 2018, Birgitta sent an email presenting the subject: -

'It is Anders Mårtensson who has formulated this theme. I attach his text to explain why. Also, it may be important to mention that Sweden is 'a very secularised country' and that faith does not occupy a position of any relevance in Swedish life. Faith ... "Don't speak about it!" This may explain our desire for an entirely Christian theme ... »

Well, I try to summarise below Anders Mårtensson's formulation of the theme.

1. There is a strong sense of hopelessness and discouragement in the face of the situation in the world and its future. This can be especially true in the "western world", and it is seen in migrations or the deterioration of the environment. Historically, despair, anxiety and concern for the future have been the constant companions of the human being. But, perhaps it can be said that the magnitude of the problems and the knowledge of the consequences are greater today than before?

2. It is often said in the church that the Christian faith can provide support in the face of discouragement and hopelessness. What does this support consist of and how can it affect our lives? A contribution based on the Christian faith is applied to motivate and inspire, for example, an active environmental commitment. The motivation is based on (a) the human mission as administrators of creation and (b) love of neighbour. But the other and only contribution of the church refers to the hope of faith. This is often mentioned, but it is rarely explained what hope consists of and how can it help and support. What is the content of a theology of hope? What consequences can this hope bring to the Christian and to everyone? "

Later Anders Mårtensson, in his formulation, presents some thoughts on Christian hope. He says the following:-

"You can see at least 3 eschatological lines that give a different meaning to Christian hope:

- 1 The Doctrine of the End: this focuses on the destiny of the individual in relation to the final judgment. Does it not lead to the inspiration to change the world?*
- 2. Future vision: it can inspire work to realise that God's kingdom is here and now.*
- 3. Something that pervades all theology: the main question becomes "What can we expect? A good theology that can convey hope must be inspired by these three points. This way we can avoid living in a hope that is so heavenly that it neglects the earth or in a hope that is so mundane that it loses all respect for heaven. A good eschatology unites the resistance of faith with the patience of hope (Jackelén¹, Gather around the Hope, 2016 page 175)*

¹ Jackelén, Antje was born in Germany and is the first female archbishop of Sweden. She is married to another German, also a priest of the Swedish Church: Hubert Heinz-Dieter Jackelén. They married before they were ordained. They have two daughters.

This is the starting point of this theme: "despair and discouragement" together with the concrete proposal of a theological and Christian theme: Birgitta, one of our Swedish pilgrims, expressly said - "This may explain our desire for an entirely Christian theme".

I confess my inability to address a topic for which I am not prepared. My theological knowledge is very limited.

However, here is the subject that was asked of me. The pages written below consist of a selection of texts by great theologians, which I make available to the Pilgrims of St Francis, In these texts we can find answers to the questions posed by the Pilgrims from Sweden. At least I hope and wish so. The first approach of Anders is that there is a strong sense of hopelessness and discouragement regarding the situation in the world and its future. On the hopelessness of this time in which we are living, Leonardo Boff says:

«One of the perverse effects of our crisis [...] is, without a doubt, the despair that is contaminating people. It is born of the anguish of not seeing any horizon from which we can glimpse a saving solution. From this emerges a tired society and the loss of the joy of living. They are the consequences of the lack of meaning, that everything will continue with the same logic, built up by corruption, falsification of news (fake news) and a reality of widespread defamation and the domination of the powerful over the masses abandoned to their fate.

This desolation also comes from a perception of the future of our world and of humanity, little matter what can happen. Well, Pope Francis observed in his encyclical "Laudato Si - On the care of our Common Home": "the catastrophic predictions cannot be underestimated with scorn and irony. The next generations could be left too many ruins, deserts, garbage. Since the current lifestyle is unsustainable, it can only end in a catastrophe"(n.161). But who thinks about all this except those who stay up to date on the global ecological discourse?

Therefore, in addition to the multiple crises that oppress us and make us suffer, we have this dark threat of an ecological nature. [...] The spiritual and religious traditions are a hymn to the meaning of life and the world. This is why the great student of utopias, Ernst Bloch, in his two great volumes of The Principle of Hope observed: "Where there is religion, there is always hope". [...]

I end with the prophet Jeremiah, who lived in under King Cyrus. The inhabitants of Babylon mocked the Jews because they no longer sang their songs & hung their instruments on the branches of the willow trees. They asked Jeremiah, "Do you have hope?" To which he replied: "I am hopeful that King Cyrus, with all his power, cannot stop the sun from being born." And I would add: he will not be able to prevent love and the children who will be born and will renew the human species. We feed in a similar hope that those who have caused this crisis, [...] who have not followed the dictates of justice, will not prevail. We will come out more purified, stronger and with a greater sense of destiny [...] for the benefit of all, starting with the poorest, and for all humanity."