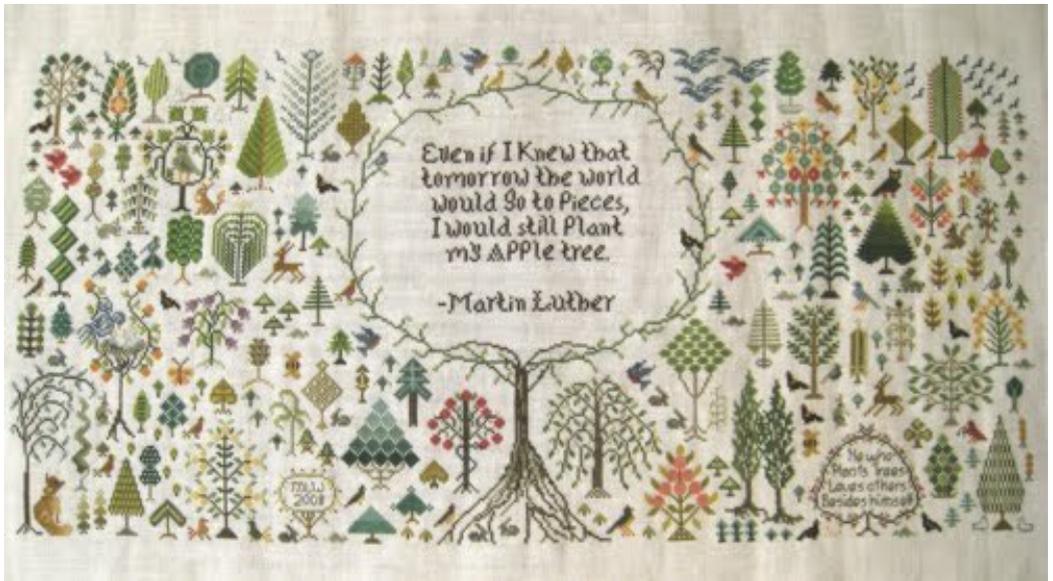


The Pilgrims of St Francis

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)*

Contents

1	Despair and Discouragement	p. 3
2	The First Hope	p. 5
3	To humanise this world: Hope that leads us to God.	p. 6
4	The Hope and meaning of life. The prayer of Francis of Assisi in San Damiano.	p. 7
5	To wait against all hope. Christian hope	p. 8
6	The witness of those who have overcome bad situations with hope.	p.11
7	Don't let them steal our hope.	p.14

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
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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

(Jackelen¹, 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."

2. The first hope.

In the year 2005, in the Exodus magazine, an interview with José Comblin was published. José Comblin was a Belgian Catholic priest, Doctor in Theology from the Catholic University of Leuven.

He worked in Latin America from 1958. At the invitation of the Archbishop-prophet Hélder Câmara he went to Recife, Brazil, as a professor at the Institute of Theology. The methodology he used in his classes was adapted to the social environment of the seminarians he was in charge of. Something that the authorities did not like. He then fell under the suspicion of the military dictatorship and was expelled from Brazil in 1971. He lived in Chile for 8 years, where he was in charge of the creation of a seminar in the city of Talca. In his book *The Ideology of National Security*, published in 1977, he criticised the doctrine that served as the basis for military dictatorships in Latin America; as a result of the publication of his book, he was expelled by Pinochet in 1980.

Back in Brazil, he settled in Paraíba, where he founded a rural seminary and was in charge of the formation of animators of Basic Ecclesial Communities. Later, he moved to Ecuador where he was an advisor to Leonidas Proaño, bishop of Riobamba. one of the main proponents of the preferential option for the poor.

Comblin was a theologian of wide experience and with a strong prophetic character. He was convinced that faith should be reflected critically from the reality of the poor. José Comblin is considered one of the leading exponents of Liberation Theology in Brazil. He died in the year 2011.

Here are some extracts from that interview in the 'Exodus' magazine

The way of Jesus can be expressed with three keys.

The first is hope, that is, the hope that not only another world is possible but that it is now beginning. It is a movement of much suffering, which goes through the cross, through the enormous struggles that can be, but where we have the conviction that we are building a new world. That is the theme of hope.

Second, the key of faith, because we have received the spirit of God that gives us strength to work in hope. Therefore, faith is trust in ourselves, because what the poor need the most is self-confidence, the feeling that they are capable of building the Kingdom here and now. That is the revelation of Jesus: the holy spirit will come and will do through you greater works than I have done. That is, the spirit will make you free, able to speak, to create and to renew life.

And the third key is love, the gathering to form community among humans. That is the fundamental vocation of the Christian message, as Saint Paul says: "faith and hope will pass away, everything else will pass, the only thing that remains is love". Then, after death, the only thing that will remain is love. Love that is something concrete, put at the service of the other, of others, primarily of those in need. Then, where there is love, there the Kingdom of God is present."

3. To humanise this world - so dehumanised: the hope that leads us to God.

In this section of the topic, what we want to emphasise is that the humanisation of society is the hope that leads us to God. That is why we have take a moment with José María Castillo Sánchez, a Spanish Catholic priest, writer and theologian of recognised prestige.

*"Theology, which governs the thinking of the Church and tells us where the decisions of the Church should go, **is more important than the Pope**, the cardinals, the bishops, the clergy, the theologians, the faithful, the laws, the rites, the customs, everything else in the Church.*

*Theology, after all, tells everyone what God wants and what God commands. So that the Pope (whoever it is) **says and commands what theology tells him.***

That's why theology is so important.

*The problem is, I believe, that **a significant number of Christians are not interested in theology.** Nor, therefore, do they know much about theology. Which is understandable. Because theology, where it is usually taught, uses a series of words, concepts and criteria, which the Greeks of Antiquity invented, but which, nowadays, is unfamiliar to many people, both in its meaning and how it can be used .*

*The centre, the axis, the key to Christian theology would have to be, not the thinking of the ancient Greek sages. And even less, the religious myths before Judaism, which we read in the Bible as "The Word of God". Christian theology should have as its centre, axis and key the origin and the determining principle of Christianity: that is the story of that humble Galilean craftsman, **Jesus of Nazareth**: his way of life, what he did, what he said, what interested and concerned him, what those, who knew him or held the "dangerous memories", saw in him - in all that this singular man left us.*

*These "**dangerous memories**" of Jesus were written in the Gospels, four collections of stories, the four Gospels, that is, the "narrative theology", a determinant summary of all possible theology that professes to be called "Christian" . **The centre of Christian theology cannot be outside the Gospels.** Nor can it be Christian theology if it does not involve a "the dangerous memories".*

*Now, reading and rereading the narrative theology, which is presented to us in the Gospels, what is immediately apparent in this set of stories is that the three great preoccupations that occupied and monopolised the life of Jesus were: **1) the health of human beings** (accounts of healing, expressed in the "literary genre" of miracles); **2) sharing foods** (the meals that are so often talked about in the gospels); **3) human relationships** (sermons and parables). Faith, the relationship with the Father, the deepest personal feelings ... everything in the life of Jesus revolves around these three concerns.*

*And these preoccupations were so strong, that Jesus put them before the norms imposed by the teachers of the law, the observances of the Pharisees, the authority of the high priests ... **To such an extent, that this cost him his life.** Jesus did all this because he said that whoever saw him, saw God also (Jn 14: 7-9). That is, he identified himself with God.*

*The central thing, in the life of Jesus, was not religion. **It was to humanise this so dehumanised world.** We should not worry so much about the dialogues of religions. We should worry about what worries all humans: health, the sharing of food, the best human relationships. The three pillars of all possible religion. This is what centred the life of Jesus: to humanise this life. **In that is the path of hope that leads us to God.** »²*

4. The Hope and meaning of life.

The prayer of Francis of Assisi in San Damiano.

The first prayer composed by St. Francis of Assisi, that we know of, is a very short prayer. It has sometimes been called "the prayer at the hour of conversion." We may not know the exact date but what is certain is that it goes back to his time of searching and struggling (the years 1205-1206). Francis is disillusioned by his life as a bourgeois and a soldier, he had already spent time in Perugia prison and is looking for the meaning of his life. With all these thoughts in his head he puts himself into prayerful mode at the foot of the crucifix of San Damiano and prays:

*Most high, glorious God,
Illuminate the darkness of my heart
and **give me a correct faith,**
a certain hope and a perfect love,
wisdom and knowledge, Lord,
that I may fulfil
your holy and true command.*

² José María Castillo, "The central thing, in the life of Jesus, was not religion, but to make this world more human" (6/07/2017). Available at: <http://www.periodistadigital.com/religion/opinion/2017/07/06/religion-church-teologia-opinion-jose-maria-castillo-lo-central-en-la-vida-de-jesus-no-was-the-religion-was-humanize-this-world.shtml> # .WWEQBGRnvl8.facebook

Leonhard Lehmann, a great Franciscan theologian, explains the meaning of this prayer. Here we have what he says about the meaning of the phrase of this prayer where Francis shows his hope:

«... give me straight faith, a certain hope and a perfect love ...
*Before the Crucifix, bright with light from the chapel of San Damiano, Francis [...] asks what constitutes and grounds the Christian life [...]: faith, hope and love. In faith, the human being surrenders, like Abraham, to the other ... In hope, I look beyond myself ... In love, I give my deepest self - a personal response to you. What anyone seeks is love; the human being grows and matures when loving and loved. Love reaches its perfection when it is given to others. This perfect love is what Francis asks. And he ask for **correct faith**. [...] For a time, Francis ran after illusory dreams. He dreamt of weapons and the way of force. But he also heard the voice of conscience, and took a different path. Now, following that path, he asks for **sure, evident hope**, a hope that far exceeds the desire for glory and honour. A hope that remains firm, because a man has put his focus of support in the Lord. And the Lord is now his security. Francis also qualifies love, the third object of his supplication, with the adjective: **perfect, complete love**. In this petition you hear the echo of that meeting with the lepers that caused his life to turn, as he himself later recognised: "And the Lord himself led me in their midst, and I practiced mercy with them. And, when I separated myself from them, what seemed bitter to me, turned into sweetness of soul and body "(Test 2-3). [...]³»*

5. To wait against all hope. Christian hope

For this section we follow Eloy Roy, who both introduces both himself and Christian hope. The text is a little long but it is worth reading all of it:

"In my years of wandering through Honduras, Argentina and China, I discovered that God was not being spoken of in the mouths of any. Their vocabulary was that of Human Rights, of the indigenous cultures to be rescued, of the ancestral lands to be recovered, of love for Mother Earth, the liberation of women, the horrendous scandal of poverty and the crime against humanity - the disappearances of people, etc. It was the language of the gospel, that of a God-made-people. But for a long time there was another god who pretended to be the one and true God. In fact, he was nothing but a fallacy invented by those who sought to take over the world. He had fearsome motives and did not speak the language of the poor like Jesus. He made war and he won. The God-made-people did not have much luck, the God-of-the-Armies crushed us. On my way back to my native Canada, I fluctuated between permanent indignation and the serene hope that the old god, enemy of justice and freedom, will burst before the end

³ Leonhard Lehmann, o.f.m.cap., The prayer of Saint Francis before the crucifix of Saint Damien [Selections of Franciscanism, vol. XX, n. 58 (1991) 65-76]. Available at: <http://www.franciscanos.org/enciclopedia/lehmann.html>

of the world, and that one does not have to leave the Church to be able to be consistent with the gospel.

What was the hope of Jesus, of Peter, of Paul and of the first Christian communities? Let's go back to Abraham, the "father of the believers". "He waited against all hope" (Romans 4:18) to get a land of his own, to be the father of many children, to win his wars, to become rich and powerful and to have his God dominate all the other gods. The hope of Moses and his people was no different. Not Caleb's, nor that of kings, prophets or wise men.

What was the hope of Jesus? Jesus passionately awaited the arrival of a Kingdom with a big "K". A Kingdom in which God would be the only Lord. Not, however, a savage, mean, grumpy, sectarian God, distrustful of his creatures ..., but a God whose measure of compassion, tolerance, tenderness and forgiveness has no measure. A waiting God (because God also has a hope!) That all humans made in his image adopt the same behaviour with each other.

A God who hopes that he will end once and for all that kind of world in which fat people eat boys. A God who says: that "what they do to the last of the battered of the earth, they do to me!" A Lord who wants justice (wow!), And therefore freedom, prosperity, happiness for everyone without exception, and not just for four or five cats ... And with eternal life above !

Jesus hoped that this Kingdom would arrive before his death and that he himself would see it with his own eyes. He hoped that his disciples would also witness it. But the facts frustrated his hope. Instead of seeing the triumph of the "fat" over the little ones, the "fat ones" finished with him, nailing him to a cross. In our concrete world made of atoms, things are like this: the "fat" win always. How not to despair? [...]

There is no need to despair! calls St Peter. Things are going to change surely. It happens that God has no calendar or clock like us. For him everything is eternally present. What has not yet become is already there (2 Peter 3, 8-9). Just as spring is moving under the ice of winter, so is the Kingdom announced by Jesus.

St Peter and the first Christians await for that Kingdom, with all their souls. They await the hour when this world melts like ice in the sun to open the way to "a new heaven and a new earth in which justice reigns". (2 Peter 3, 10-13). But the world does not dissolve. The new heaven and the new earth continue to wait ... And justice too!

St Paul himself awaits the end of the old world and the imminent arrival of a new world. He travelled the Roman empire tirelessly with the hope of preparing as many people as possible to welcome the next world. But the years pass and the awaited world does not appear. Paul must rethink his calculations ... he tries a new approach. From then on Paul talks about the old man and the new man. According to him, the return of Christ and the arrival of the Kingdom will be the fruit of an interior revolution.

There is in our inner being a part of ourselves that still belongs to that old world that has crucified Jesus; we have to get rid of that and nail it on the cross so that it is born in us, together with the Risen One, a new being totally identified with the great values of the Gospel (Ephesians 2, 6, 2 Cor 4, 16-18).

Yes if, in this deep place of being where each and every one is an "I", the doors are open to the Risen One and to his Gospel, then yes, the long-awaited Kingdom has already arrived ... and this, although we are still far from being able to see it and that we have only an extremely embryonic image of it (1 Corinthians 13, 12).

Therefore, Paul exhorts us not to live as people without hope (Eph. 2, 12). To never resign ourselves to injustice, since it would be to renounce the hope of the Kingdom. To fight "as if" we had already triumphed and to run "as if" we already reached the goal (1 Corinthians 9, 24-27, Hebrews 11, 27).

My hope. I will be more specific. The hope I have for myself, for the Church, for society and for the whole world is that our conscience turns 360 degrees. That first in our mind, and then in our attitudes and our commitment, we overcome the old antagonisms between matter and spirit, man and woman, the sacred and the profane, religion and secularism, between Christianity and paganism, between the left and the right, between conservatism and progress, between traditionalism and revolution (Galatians 3, 28).

That Christians who hope to be Good News in the world, understand that all that the Gospel of Jesus asks us is to be honest and authentic, and whatever the cost to heart and body, in everything and for all everywhere to be on the side of the small, the vulnerable, the impoverished, as well as all the victims of the strongest. That from there, we are, in our souls and consciences, the tireless seekers, defenders and promoters of justice, of the Rights of the person, of the Rights of the Earth, of the freedom of individuals and peoples, and of fraternity among all humans.

And that in this liberation dynamic we refrain from wielding axes and guillotines. May we know how to store in ourselves ample space to breathe as humans, think with wisdom, reconcile the reconcilable, cure the curable, joyfully celebrate the good, the great, the beautiful, and never negotiate what Jesus would never negotiate. That we do not fall into the temptation to fight injustice with injustice, to lie with simulacra of truth, to hate with more hatred.

And that at the same time, in the depths of our being, the door of the dreaming company remains open to all humanity, even to the adversaries themselves, without judging their guilt or their evil, nor their political colour, their ideology or religion Impossible? To wait for that, is not to dream the impossible? ... Be confident ! Well, if our hope is impossible, we will never move mountains, we will never get out of the quagmire in which we are sinking. We will stop evolving, we

will stop growing and moving forward. The anchor is a splendid symbol of hope (Hebrews 6, 19), but, by definition, it is an object that actually prevents the ship moving forward ... I prefer the image of the Little Prince of Saint-Exupéry: "What makes the desert special is that it hides a well somewhere. " My hope, in the desert, is the well of the Kingdom; although invisible to my eyes, it makes me walk ... He is calling me with signs of friendship from the depths of my being, from the heart of Humanity and the whole Universe. He is pushing me with signs of love from the same Creation, which, at the bottom of its heart, is also impelled by an immense hope: to be "freed in turn from corruption to enter the freedom of the glory of the sons and daughters of God "(Romans 8, 20-21)." ⁴

6 The witness of those who have overcome the bad with hope.

When choosing testimonies of hope and resistance in the face of adversity, we must remember entire groups of people who, with dignity and hope, have withstood the hardest tests that life can bring: the black peoples subjected and discriminated against in the South Africa of the Apartheid regime; the Palestinian people imprisoned by Israeli Zionism in the concentration camp of Gaza; whole populations of West Africa subjected to slavery and taken by boat to the plantations of America; the indigenous peoples of Bolivia working as slaves in the silver mines; ... the list would be endless. We must also remember great people, known by all: Mahatma Gandhi, Anna Frank, Oscar Romero, Victoire Ingabire, Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara ... these are only a few examples of dignity, resistance and hope. So here are two biographies that express the strength of over-riding ethical feelings and that enable us to consider the effort or rebellion before a powerful adversary. They are the beginning of resistance and give strength to hope.

These biographies are from the writings of Jaume Botey, professor of History at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and collaborator of the Cristianisme i Justícia centre. He highlights two figures of extraordinary ideological, ethical and biographical significance. They are the two well-known personalities **Simone Weil** and **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**.

⁴ Eloy Roy, Wait against all hope (07/23/2012). Available at: <http://todoelmundovaal-cielo.blogspot.com/2012/07/wait-against-all-hope.html>



Simone Weil.

The Embodiment of suffering - "waiting for God"

She was born in Paris, in 1909, in a well-to-do, Jewish but agnostic family. She was an intellectual with a keen mind, a social critic, a connoisseur of the Greek classics, a philosopher and mystic.

The secret of her radical and short life lies in her acute awareness and voluntary solidarity with the oppressed. She fought against two forces of evil: workers' oppression and fascist madness. Her strictness with herself and her inexplicable mystical experience led

her to identify with the working class.

In 1931, she taught philosophy in the Girl's High school at Le Puy. From her salary she lived on the salary of a labourer, the rest she shared. She went to demonstrations for the unemployed. The educational authorities, as a sanction, moved her to Auxerre and then to Rouen. She continued to participate in demonstrations and workers' organisations. Three years later, she left teaching to join the working classes. First, at the Alsthom factory in Paris on the assembly line, then at the Carnaud de Billancourt and then at Renault in Paris. During that time she wrote 'Cahiers', the kernel of her numerous essays. With the outbreak of civil war in Spain she decided to fight against fascism. She joined the International Brigade in the Durruti column, near Aragón but had to leave after an accident.

On a subsequent trip to Italy, in Assisi she felt impelled to kneel and pray. She spent the Holy Week of 1939 in Solesmes strongly moved by the Passion of Christ. She began a personal path to follow Christ. This led her to be interested in St. John of the Cross, in the Upanisads⁵, and the Bhagavad Gita⁶. She considered that all religions were openings to the divine and universal spirit. With the beginning of World War II, she deepened her spiritual search, her disconcerting radicalism and her mystical side. Given her delicate state of health and in order to escape Nazi persecution, her family travelled to New York, but immediately she felt that she must return to join the resistance. Soon she was diagnosed with tuberculosis. In solidarity with those who are hungry because of the war, she refused to eat. Because she considered the act of 'believing' to be huge and because she felt herself to be in spiritual poverty she refused to receive baptism. She died on August 24, 1943. Her deep philosophical and religious reflections came out of her mystical experiences. Her thinking about the presence of God's grace in the world was based on identification with the defeated.

⁵ The Upanishads are the collection of more than 200 sacred books of Hinduism written in Sanskrit language between the seventh century BC. and the beginning of the III century AD

⁶ The Bhagavad-Gita (The Song of the Lord) is the most important part of the Mahabharata (sacred book of India), an ancient epic that describes certain events that took place between 5 and 7 thousand years ago.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Living in the world without a working hypothesis of 'God'

*In 1945, Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor, shortly before being hanged in Flossenburg for having taken part in a plot against Hitler, asked himself if his previous faith was too difficult to understand in the times that he lived in? If we had to live in this world as if God did not exist? What if God really had something to say to this world that does not believe in him anymore? These questions were asked in his 'Letters from Prison', published under the title *Resistance and Submission*, his most popular work. It is an impressive document written between bombs and sirens, about the behaviour of the Christian in a totally non-religious world.*

Bonhoeffer's initial attitude to faith is diametrically opposed to that of Bloch and Benjamin. Bonhoeffer starts with his being a believer, but as a believer who must live his faith and show himself in a non-religious way before the world. "God compels us to live in a world without the hypothesis of a working God." It is about living in a world without God and without the substitutes for God, a pseudo-religiosity that might cover this absence. "Being a Christian does not mean a specific way of being human, but it simply means being a man". Consequently, the church does not have the task of creating its own distinctive spaces or institutions. Bonhoeffer's is a call to the radical following of Jesus outside the cultural context of religion.

What do the "implications" of this consist of for Bonhoeffer? In the recognition of oppression, in the awareness of human suffering and in placing the hope of the Christian in overcoming this slavery and suffering. The Christian, unlike the one who is not, "has accepted the task of being part of suffering humanity". In addition to prayer, the task of the Christian is "to build justice in a world in which God is no longer present."

Redemption, a central concept in his thought, is not only a future concept but, above all, the realisation of justice and truth in history. There are no islands or reserved spaces in the world for works done in faith. The Christian acts, like any other person, in society, in the university, in the party, in the union. And this work is Christian in the sense that it is simply a work that promotes justice and dignity, rather than it is the work of a baptised person or of a religious institution.

It is not ideology that determines the utopian values of experience, but the deep values that underpin it. ⁴⁷

⁷ Jaime Botey, Building Hope, Christianity and Justice (June 2008). Available at: <https://www.cristianismeijusticia.net/es/construir-la-esperanza>

7. Don't let them steal our hope.

We finish this theme with a text by **Carlos Alberto Libânio Christo**, better known as **Frei Betto** - a Brazilian theologian, one of the greatest exponents of the Theology of Liberation, a Dominican priest and writer of progressive ideas supporting the liberation movements in Latin America.

"If you no longer see future prospects, despise politicians and politics, retire to your private sphere, it is a sign that your hope has been stolen. If you can no longer endure the news, if you believe that the human species is a failed project and that all the liberations end in oppression, know that they have stolen your hope.

If you breath out hatred for the web and distrust all those who make speeches about ethics and the preservation of the environment and only trust your bank account, no doubt, they have stolen your hope.

If you no longer harbour dreams of a better future, if you do not inject utopia into your veins and you do not take up your role as a citizen, preferring to isolate yourself in cotton wool, it is a sign that your hope has been stolen.

Job's friends used all the arguments to make him give up hope. How did he persist in maintaining it if he had lost land, wealth and family? Job did not feel guilty, he did not throw on the shoulders of others the evils that afflicted him, he did not abhor the setbacks that happened to him. The poem by Franz Wright, inspired by the prayer of the Persian poet Rabi'a al-Adawiyya, says:

*"God, if I proclaim my love for you out of fear of hell, incinerate me in it;
If I proclaim my love because I crave paradise, close it in my face.
But if I talk to you because you exist, stop hiding from me your
infinite beauty. "*

*It was in that gift of faith, hope and love that Job was rewarded by contemplating the infinite beauty: **"I heard you with my lips, but now my eyes see you"** (42, 5).*

*As **Spinoza** wrote in his theological-political treatise, "free people are guided by hope rather than fear, the one who is oppressed is guided more by fear than by hope; the other longs to cultivate his life. The other puts up with the oppressor. The first I call free, the second I call a servant. "*

*You, like me, are **victim of promises that are transformed into mirages** and end in frustrations. I still will not admit that they steal my hope.*

*The secret? Simple. I do not cling to the here and now. I look at the contradictions of the past, marked by setbacks and advances. **How many lost battles did not end in victorious wars?** And how many emperors, lords of life and death, from the Caesars to Attila the Hun, from Napoleon to Hitler, did not end up dishonoured by history? I face the long-term future. **I know I will not participate in the harvest, but I try to die as a seed.***

I do not believe in speeches or tie my hope to the parachute of some superior being that promises short-term salvation. I demand programmes and projects, and judge their bearers according to rigid criteria. I try to know their past life, their commitment to social movements, their ethics and values.

I know that the future will be what we do in the present. I do not expect miracles. I roll up my sleeves, convinced that "who knows now, does not wait for what happens."

*Hope is a theological virtue. Faith believes; love welcomes; Hope builds. Just as walking is done, hope is woven like the dawn in the poem by **João Cabral de Melo Neto**:*

*"A single cock does not weave the morning;
He will always need other roosters.
The one who takes his song
and throws it to another; from another rooster
to take the song that another rooster once threw
and throw it to another; and other roosters
that with many other roosters cross
the sun's rays with their songs
so that the morning, a delicate fabric,
is woven between all the roosters. "*

I like the verb to hope: to unroll Ariadne's thread that leads us all out of the labyrinth. *It is a collective effort, a community action, a common work that sings us in the certainty that from within the stone flows the stream of water that forms the stream, and makes the stream become a river that tears through the earth, waters the fields, feeds those who live on its banks, to join the ocean floor. As **Mário Quintana** says in "Das utopias":*

*"If things are unattainable ... wow!
It is not a reason not to love them ...
How sad would be the roads, if it were not
For the magical presence of the stars! "⁸*

Pedro A. Sanz, Valladolid, December 6, 2018.

⁸ Frei Betto, "If he no longer harbours dreams of a better future or inject utopia into a vein, his hope was stolen", Journalist Digital (3/09/2017). Available at: <https://www.periodistadigital.com/religion/opinion/2017/09/03/opinion-frei-betto-si-ya-no-alberga-suenos-de-un-futuro-mejor-ni-se-inject-utopia-in-vein-they-stole-the-hope-church-religion-god.shtml>

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