



# *Ardere et Lucere*



**Anchored in HOPE**

FALL



2020

# What would life be

A teacher posed this question to her students and asked them to reply by drawing their answers, since she believed that a drawing can convey one's beliefs and feelings more pointedly. The students started drawing, and as the teacher walked through the class, she saw on those white papers depressed human beings, worlds without light and beauty. Some even drew death. Then she saw that one student had drawn himself in his room with the light on, tucked in his bed, expectantly looking at the door for his mother to enter and read to him the customary bedtime story. A life without hope didn't exist for him. Asked why he chose such a drawing, he replied: "Because I know that mom will come as she always does, and that if she is late, she will come in anyway and sit on my bed and read to me in my sleep!" This child's hope was his mom, a person who was there every night, whether he was still awake to see her or not.

I believe that such is the hope for any Christian; it is a person, Jesus, who is always there for us whether we are aware of His presence or not! We often fall victim to that generalized sentiment in society that looks at the present situation and does not see anything good. It dismisses hope as something unattainable, as a dream, a mere children's fantasy that has nothing to do with the present situation, which can be so difficult at times. Some of us have lost that ability to believe beyond a doubt that the Father who made us is still watching over us, is still keeping us in the palm of His hand, is still taking care of us as He does for his creation every day. We are alive because the Father's love continuously breathes in us His spirit, and our hope rests in Him. This is what the little boy expressed with his drawing – no matter if he were awake or asleep, his mom would come to read to him, and that was enough for him to live with hope.

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(Pope Benedict XVI)

# without hope?

“Hope is the most humble of the three theological virtues, for it hides itself in this life.” These words of Pope Francis encourage us to look for the signs of God’s presence in our everyday events. Only hope can bring joy in the midst of suffering! Only hope can give us the strength to go on when the present seems so uncertain and cruel.

The current pandemic has tested our ability to hope, especially when we see people continuing to suffer and to die alone, still without a vaccine. All of a sudden, we have been faced with our own vulnerability, we who had placed our total trust in science to take care of us, who were living comfortable lives, unaware that the smallest virus could create such a disturbance in our life worldwide! In the meantime, we see that the number of poor in the world increases and that the economic crisis is affecting the lives of many people. And we ask: “Where is God?”

This is when we must turn to Scripture and to the teachings of the Church to renew our hope. *“The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life.’ These words remind us that hope is not a fleeting emotion, much less an attitude that fades when life is hard, but a resilient stance toward life marked by trust, confidence, and perseverance. Hope empowers us to live differently because a Christian understanding of hope is rooted in the unshakable conviction that God loves us and wants our good, a fact memorably exclaimed by Paul’s declaration to the Romans: ‘If God is for us, who can be against us?’”(Spe Salvi). To live with hope, then, is to take those words to heart and to allow that knowledge to change our lives in new and surprising ways.*

We have learned from our Foundress to entrust ourselves completely into the arms of the Father, like a little child, knowing that He will take care of us. And that was how she

had lived all her life as it is demonstrated by her words a few days before dying: *“Jesus is here...and He is always with you... Let us love our good God!... I in the blessedness that I hope to reach through his goodness and mercy, you in humility and struggle.”* Yes, nothing can keep us from the hope that He is faithful and will do what He has promised!

We read again in the Encyclical Spe Salvi: *“In hope we were saved, says Saint Paul to the Romans, and likewise to us (Rom 8:24). Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey.”* (Spe Salvi) I believe our goal is great enough, because our goal is Jesus himself, and His promise that we will see the Father.

“Hope is the most humble of the three theological virtues, for it hides itself in this life.”

- Pope Francis

I close with the words of Pope Francis, who never fails to invite us to be joyous even in the midst of struggles and difficulties, because

Christian joy is grounded in our hope in God and not in ourselves. *“Today... we ask for the grace of God to keep us in the hope of the Church, because it does not ‘fail.’... When there is no human hope, there is that hope that carries us forward, humble, simple—but it gives a joy, at times a great joy, at times only of peace, but the security that hope does not disappoint: hope doesn’t disappoint.”*

Know that you are in our prayers.

*Sister Carla Bertani*

Mother Carla Bertani, OLS

# H



# PE



By Sr. Serena Pinotti, OLS

To speak of hope today may seem out of fashion. How often do we pronounce the word 'hope' with mere resignation? After doing everything we can, when we see that there is nothing left to do, then we say, "we hope!" ... And so, it happens that we easily associate hope with a passive attitude, or with something to cling to only in extreme situations. But hope is not like that!

Pope Francis helps us to see this virtue in a different light, using highly effective images: anchor, seed, yeast. "Hope is like anchoring on the other shore and clinging to a rope"; "Hope is the patience to know that we must sow, but it is God who makes us grow"; "Hope is like leaven, it works from below, from within."

Hope, then, is to cast the anchor of one's life beyond one's own security, beyond one's own comfort, and to seek the will of God always, rather than one's own. Hope is patience and trust in Providence, which is always at work, day and night, though we may not notice it. Hope is choosing to be like leaven, which silently affects our everyday life.

Blessed Elisabetta Renzi, foundress of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows, witnessed to this way of living true hope. Born into a wealthy family in Italy in the mid-nineteenth century, with a future of comfort before her, she instead chose to spend her life for the Lord at the service of education. She cast the anchor of her life on the other side, because she found the Rock, our Lord, and she left her own security. She wrote to her brother on August 1, 1839:

*"I delight in the thought that I have left everything for God. It is gratifying to give when you love! And I love him, my God, so much that He is determined to have me all for Himself."*

*"It seems to me that I could do no less than to spend myself and be consumed to give back to Him a little bit of what He has given to me. When everything was becoming complicated, when the present was so painful, and it appeared that the future would be even darker, I closed my eyes and abandoned myself like a little child into the arms of my heavenly Father."*

We do not see sadness or resignation in these words! Instead, there is peace, deep joy, an awareness of being safe, and a sense of freedom. Blessed Elisabetta understood that everything in this life passes, that everything is a means to obtain what lasts forever. For this reason, she does not fear stripping herself of her own possessions and dedicating her life to become a silent leaven in the lives of so many generations of young people who needed to be educated. She learns not to hurry, not to expect that things will always go as she wants; she knows how to be patient, how to stop and abandon herself: she has understood that her task, like the task of each of us, is to sow. God will certainly make the seed grow.

Hope is a serious matter that personally challenges us in our daily choices. How do we react to the unexpected that upsets our projects? How do we deal with the needs of the poor who live near and far? On what or whom have we cast the anchor of our lives? Do we know how to be leaven in the dough, even if it means not being noticed? Are we willing to drop the anchor of our lives on the other side, agreeing to go beyond our own security?

*"It is not easy to live in hope, but it should be the air that every Christian breathes,"* says Pope Francis, *"air of hope, true hope, the one that does not disappoint because it is fixed on Jesus."*

Blessed Elisabetta Renzi shows us how to follow this path: *"We do not look at ourselves too much. We would like to see, understand... but we do not have enough confidence in the One who fills us and surrounds us with his love."* The invitation is strong: to take our eyes off ourselves, off our demands and our own needs. It is not impossible, it is sufficient to desire it; and in every circumstance, we will discover the presence of God and His love. Whoever hopes in the Lord will not be disappointed!



# “NOTHING IS FAR FROM GOD.”

SAINT MONICA



*By Sr. Heather Sikes, OLS*

Augustine became one of the most influential Saints in the Church as he became a priest and bishop himself!

**S**aint Monica is a beautiful witness to us of what it means to be “the salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13) and to live as a light on a lampstand (cf. Matt 5:15). Her witness is incredibly relevant for us today in how she lived hope during the most difficult times in her life.

Saint Monica went through many difficulties during her lifetime. Amongst her children, one became well-known, her son Saint Augustine. In his early life, he lived far from God, adopting the pagan beliefs of his father, who later converted to the Faith closer to his death. Augustine was a very intelligent young man, and he became a professor, teaching the pagan beliefs that he practiced. He lived a comfortable life with mistresses, fathering a son, and he continued to grow further away from God. This brought much pain to Monica; like all mothers, she knew the heartache of watching her child go astray. However, St. Monica never lost hope; she persevered in prayer for her son for 17 years, because she believed that the grace of God would soften his heart.

Through Divine Providence and the holy prayers of his mother, Augustine eventually encountered the great Saint Ambrose. It was through this holy encounter that Augustine’s spirit began stirring to search for the Truth in life. Finding it in the Catholic Church, he converted and eventually discerned his own vocation within the Church.

Saint Monica shows us that what matters in our lives are not the mountains of difficulties, but how we respond to them - how we embrace them for the sanctification of our souls and the souls of others. She saw her difficulties as opportunities to intercede for her family, and she endured those challenges faithfully. She is a witness for us that God never abandons us, and that He continues to invite us to keep our confidence in Him, despite our most difficult situations. She teaches us that when our lives become darkened by ‘impossible’ challenges, we can have hope - hope in our God Who is greater than anything in this life, Who loves us beyond our deepest imaginings, and Who desires the ultimate best for us - union with Him in Heaven and on earth. She shows us how to live in hope by trusting and relying on God for all things and seeking to live the present moment in the Presence of God.

I’ve grown in devotion to Saint Monica over the years in praying for all mothers, and my mom in particular. I remain close to the intercession of Saint Monica because she understands what we go through on our journey of faith in this life; moreover, she witnesses for us how to truly live the faith we believe and profess. What a treasure we have! Saint Monica remains an example of how our hope can transform the world. May she intercede for us as we live the gift of our lives well, remembering her inspiration, “Nothing is far from God.”



# Wellspring of HOPE

“Placing my hope in the beautiful gift of the Blessed Sacrament gave me strength to weather a trial that is only momentary in God's time.”

*By Tim Schooler*

**F**or most of us, daily life defined as “normal” means going to work, or school, spending time with family and friends, routine trips to the grocery store, attending sporting events, soccer, football and baseball games, and most importantly for many of us, attending Holy Mass. These are aspects of our lives in a fast-paced world that we have in so many instances taken for granted, as they were always available to us. Then things began to change, news began to spread of COVID 19. At first it seemed so distant, because it was happening in other parts of the world. Our thoughts and prayers were for those who had been afflicted. The majority of us thought surely it could not happen here, in a country with some of the best scientists and state of the art medical care facilities in the world.

However, life as we knew it changed on March 22, 2020. Our Governor issued a stay at home order. Suddenly, things we had grown so accustomed to all of our lives were no longer possible. Businesses which were non-essential had to close, schools and classes were cancelled. It seemed like we went to bed one night and awoke to a completely different world the next day.

With all of the pandemonium and confusion suddenly thrust upon us, a new reality began to take shape, one that was difficult to accept for Christians, and Catholics especially. Masses were suspended; we could only attend virtual Masses. Nothing like this had ever happened in our lifetime, or at least in the lives of most of us who are alive today. Sacraments we had taken for granted as the very foundation and core of our faith and daily life had, in a moment, been taken away from us. We could no longer receive the Holy Eucharist - the wellspring of hope and healing. How could this happen? Surely, God does not want us to be separated from Him, to be unable to commune with Him and partake of the beautiful Sacraments Jesus Himself had given us. Overnight, we found ourselves seemingly isolated in our faith, no longer able to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. This stirred so many emotions in me.

My faith journey has been a rocky one; I was born and raised Catholic, but for many years I was not true to my faith. I would attend Mass occasionally, but I always found an excuse or a reason to be busy doing other things when it came to Mass. Then one Sunday afternoon around twenty-two years ago, I attended Mass with my wife. A group of teens from a local Catholic high school had just returned from a weekend retreat and were attending Mass that evening at the end of their retreat. After Communion, they were holding hands, singing, and crying. At that moment, something moved in me that I had never felt before. It was such a powerful emotion; though I did not realize it at the time, I now know it had to be the Holy Spirit! For the first time in my life, I can say I “felt” the presence of God in Church.

From that day forward, I never missed weekly Mass, or a Holy Day of Obligation. Though as powerful as that experience was,

my conversion was still not yet complete. Like Saint Patrick, I prayed that the Lord would open “my mind to an awareness of my unbelief, in order that even so late, I might remember my transgressions and turn with all my heart to the Lord my God, who had regard for my insignificance and pitied my youth and ignorance. And he watched over me before I knew him, and before I learned sense or even distinguished between good and evil, and he protected me, and consoled me as a father would his son.” (Saint Patrick of Ireland)

I knew God was calling me, but I wasn't sure how to answer. It wasn't until about four years ago, during Advent, that I began to attend Daily Mass. It was going to be a small sacrifice, a penance, perhaps something I would only do for a few weeks. But as I began to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist every day, that “sacrifice” turned into a need, a desire to commune with Him more. Only then did I truly begin to understand what it meant to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. I had been transformed, it finally became clear to me that my life was not my own, that things I had given such importance became secondary to my desire to love God. I know that this was within me from the moment he created me, but selfishness and sin had hidden it from me. When the pandemic prevented us from receiving Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, I longed for Him more, He who had given me hope and strength during other times of pain, loss, and suffering that my family has experienced.

Not being able to attend Mass reminded me of a passage from Matthew's Gospel, “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Mt. 28:20) began to make sense in a renewed way for me. Jesus did not leave us; nor had He been taken from us. It took a pandemic for me to become aware of what lives within me. Through the grace of God, we were given the opportunity to participate in live streaming Mass, and many Church's remained open for prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. My relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist was not lost but had evolved, literally transformed. Placing my hope in the beautiful gift of the Blessed Sacrament gave me strength to weather a trial that is only momentary in God's time. For truly, as Paul in his letter to the Romans says, “hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Rom. 5:5)





# Our Lady of Pontmain

*By Sr. Cristina Angelini, OLS*

## Queen of Hope

Virgin Mary,  
Mother of the Church and our Mother,  
in this time of trial, we come to take shelter  
under your cloak of mercy.

In Pontmain,  
you have revived hope in discouraged hearts.  
Come today to strengthen our failing faith.  
Establish our families in trust and peace.

Repel the invisible enemy who attacks us  
and who jeopardizes the health of so many  
of our brothers and sisters.

We entrust you with the various players in civil life,  
who put all their energy into treating the sick  
and preventing the spread of the virus.

Open our hearts and our hands  
to the needs of the poorest,  
and pray for us Jesus, your Son, and our Brother:  
May he lead us from the Cross  
to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen

*From Our Lady of Hope Parish*

As a cradle Catholic, I was always taught that hope walks hand in hand with faith and love. Every heart yearns for hope, especially when life challenges us, and above all, when our faith is being tested. In his book, *On Hope*, Pope Francis states that “We have such a need in these times that can appear dark, in which we sometimes feel disoriented by the evil and violence that surrounds us, by the distress of so many of our brothers and sisters. We need hope. We feel disoriented and even rather discouraged because we are powerless, and it seems this darkness will never end.” Pope Francis’ words especially echoed in my heart when I lost my father to cancer. I became more aware that our existence is a journey, with Heaven as its final destination. It was in the darkness that I clung to that hope.

When we need comfort, encouragement, and assurance, we go to our mothers and fathers in the spirit, which the Lord, in His mercy, has placed in our lives. They are like stars shining in our darkness. As my father lost his battle with cancer and my faith was shaken, I ran to our Blessed Mother, our Lady of Hope.

God sent His only begotten Son born of a virgin, our Mother of Hope. Mary’s *fiat* allowed the Son of God to become one of us in everything except sin. Jesus entered into our lives because of our Lady’s *Yes*. Her openness and obedience to God’s plan changed the course of history completely. From the Angel Gabriel’s visit, Mary became the source of hope through which God promised our salvation. Mary’s *fiat* led her from Bethlehem to Calvary, because of her belief and hope in God’s promise. As a woman of prayer, of faith, and hope, she is a model for all of us while we journey toward our heavenly home.

We pray and invoke our Blessed Mother under many different titles. One of my favorite titles is Mother of Hope because, despite whatever we are going through, she understands our pains, sufferings, doubts, and fears. She understands, and she empathizes with us, because she lived and experienced everything before us.

Our Lady, Mother of Hope, is also known as Our Lady of Pontmain. She interceded and assured protection to the village of Pontmain, France, during the Franco-Prussian Revolution. The apparition of Our Lady at Pontmain happened on the same day a noontime earthquake occurred. People were starting to doubt, thinking God had forgotten and abandoned them. In this valley of tears, under the yoke of war and fears, on January 17, 1871, the Virgin Mary appeared to four children above a barn on the farm of the Barbadette family in Pontmain.

The Virgin Mary never spoke to the children. She was silent; she only smiled and moved her open arms and hands. A written message appeared on a large white banner that unrolled beneath the feet of Our Lady: “But you must pray, my children, because God will hear your prayers, and Jesus, His Son, will be touched by your prayers.” During the apparition, our Lady’s facial expression became thoughtful, and a red crucifix appeared in her hands with Jesus Christ’s name written on top of the cross. The color red symbolized the blood of our Lord, and also the violence and the devastation people were experiencing at that time. The single apparition lasted three hours.

A week before the apparition, the invading Prussians were ready to destroy and conquer the village of Pontmain. In addition to the war and the earthquake, the entire area was also engulfed in a typhoid epidemic, and smallpox was spreading among the people. However, following the apparition, within eleven days, Prussia had mysteriously withdrawn its troops. An armistice was signed, and the war was over. Pontmain and France were spared.

*Mary’s fiat led her  
from Bethlehem to Calvary,  
because of her belief and  
hope in God’s promise.*

Nearly 150 years later, the plight of the people of Pontmain could look very familiar to us. At the global level, we are facing a pandemic, terminal diseases, wars, and natural disasters. The entire world is dealing with the loss of lives due to circumstances beyond human control. Is our faith being challenged by events out of our control? Is praying going to make a difference? Has God forgotten us? Where is God? Our Lady of Pontmain’s invitation to pray is for us as well.

People who go through “earthquakes” in their lives can understand the temptation of giving up and losing hope. During our “earthquakes,” our Lady is a refuge and shelter. She is present with her maternal love and tells us not to give up, but to believe that God knows and that He will provide. Pope Francis tells us, “Hope never disappoints. Optimism disappoints, but hope does not.” Are we optimistic Catholics, or are we people of hope? Whatever “earthquake” we may find ourselves in, we are not alone. Returning to God, through a conversion of our hearts, leads us to walk on His path and find Him.

Our Lady of Pontmain, Mother of Hope, is on our side and walks with us here and now, guiding us to our final destination. How do we find the way amidst storms and darkness? How do we maintain hope during uncontrollable events? Mary can always be a star of hope for us. So, we cry to her, our Mother of Hope. Even in the darkness of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, Mary bore the certainty of hope, making her way to Easter morning. She reminds us that always “the Alleluia dwells beyond Calvary.”



The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome.

*By Brittany Primeaux*



# “thy kingdom come, thy will be done....”

Growing up Catholic in south Louisiana, I assumed living a good holy life would make my sufferings minimal. “Good things happen to good people,” right? For the majority of my life, this was absolutely true. I had a remarkable family, married the love of my life, and began having babies! Maximilian was born in 2013, and his sister Evangeline followed in 2015. We struggled with a few miscarriages, but we were hopeful that our family would continue to grow. In 2016, we suffered a miscarriage at 14 weeks. Losing our baby, named Landry, was a pain unlike anything I had ever experienced. Having to hold that tiny little body in my hands broke my spirit. I remember falling asleep that evening feeling completely empty. Satan tormented me that night, and I audibly heard: “how can you call yourself woman, when you can’t even contain life?”

I was devastated, but I knew my Lord was so much bigger than that voice that found me in my darkness. A few weeks later, we found ourselves pregnant again. I knew this was God’s promise fulfilled. We would give birth to a beautiful baby boy, Leo, on June 2, 2017. He was treasured from the very moment he arrived. He was entirely healthy and loved beyond words. I would have never imagined what our lives would become.

*“This will is certainly not my own, but I know with every fiber of my being, that it is His and ordained with a very certain path for our family. This conviction is what gives me hope - not a superficial hope, but a hope anchored in faith. I hope in a God who does work miracles and fulfill promises.”*



On December 4, 2017, I received a phone call that drastically changed everything. Leo had stopped breathing in his sleep; his sitter and EMT's could not resuscitate him. I frantically drove to his sitter's home, "Not another one Lord! Please don't take my baby." The EMT's rushed him to the hospital where I begged them not to stop working: "Just give me my baby back." The doctor was so gentle and kind as she informed me, after trying for over an hour, that there was no heartbeat to be found. I will never forget looking at his beautiful body and just begging for a miracle. "You raised people from the dead Lord, please hear my prayer. I don't care if he has brain damage, just please let him stay with me." We stayed with him for hours, but ultimately knew that we had to physically leave him. My amazing husband carried me out of the hospital as we drove home to our other children.

When we got home, a priest friend was at my house. That night he asked me, "Are you mad, momma?" With hot tears streaming down my face, I said "Yes, I'm mad!" His words have always stayed with me: "Good, be mad... don't be bitter!" He also shared that being mad at God isn't a bad thing, "because you can't be mad at a stranger. You loved Him once, you'll love Him again." That night, I begged for death. I just wanted to hold Leo again. It was a darkness unlike anything else. And just like the rest of the day, I was met with silence from God.

How does a parent possibly take on the task of telling their children that they will never see their sibling on Earth again? We realized we didn't have the strength that night, so by God's grace, we waited until the morning. My husband told Max and Evie about their brother. Max, at 4 years old, understood immediately and began crying. It was the only time in his life that I was unable to comfort him.

The days leading up to Leo's funeral were a blur. Having to shop for funeral attire for the kids, having to write an obituary... I hated all of it! Anger soon replaced my sadness. But Leo's funeral was beautiful. How can that even be true? But it really was. The day began with SNOW - in South Louisiana! This was nothing short of our sweet boy and our Lord gifting our children with a morning to just play in the snow and be kids. As the wake began, our associate pastor guided

**"Let his sweet little life  
make us better people.**

**Better spouses, better parents,  
better children, better siblings  
and better friends."**

us in a meditative rosary written by St. Teresa of Calcutta, and then we welcomed all the people who were touched by Leo's life. Seeing how many people filled our beautiful Cathedral brought comfort to this unquenchable sorrow. The Mass was led by our pastor, and his homily was Spirit filled. As Leo's funeral was on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, Father spoke of Mary, and how at the Cross, she leaned into the pain. She never shied away from it, and he encouraged us to do the same. He also mentioned how this little baby never walked or spoke, and yet, filled this church with so many people to honor him!

As the years have passed, my spirit has still had its struggles. Thousands of times in my life, I have prayed the Our Father: "thy kingdom come, THY will be done..." This will is certainly not my own, but I know with every fiber of my being, that it is His and ordained with a very certain path for our family. This conviction is what gives me hope - not a superficial hope, but a hope anchored in faith. I hope in a God who does work miracles and fulfill promises.

We have since added Annie and Ellie to our little family. There is a specific pain with Max's only brother being in Heaven and not being able to change that for him. But I must once again lean on the faith that God's plan is so much bigger than my own. I have found much comfort in the lives of our saints and in Scripture. One particular passage drags me out of darkness: John 1:5. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." The darkness in our lives absolutely still exists, and being a good person doesn't exempt anyone from suffering. It does, however, allow you to see God, the light, shining within it. If you are experiencing suffering, know that you are not alone. You are seen, loved, and valued! Through grace, this suffering will bring you closer to God and who He uniquely designed you to be.

Writing an obituary for my child is never something I thought I would have to do. A line that I think of often is "Let his sweet little life make us better people. Better spouses, better parents, better children, better siblings, and better friends." I hope that anyone who reads this will be touched by Leo's life and be better because of him! I know I am. St. Leo, pray for us.

# Sure and Certain

By Postulant Justine Del Castillo



“ I have come to realize that hope lies in happiness. It is where the Lord wills His plan for me. It is living my daily life and trusting that God’s plan is better than my own plan. ”

Our God is a God of hope. When we are searching for answers during an internal struggle, it is easy to lose sight of hope. In the words of Mother Angelica: “Faith is what gets you started. Hope is what keeps you going. Love is what brings you to the end.” In loss, pain, and difficulty, hope may seem distant. When Mary endured the pain and sorrow at the foot of the cross, she knew that with faith came hope. She remained with her Son till the end, waited patiently with faith, then encountered hope. During times of uncertainty in my own life, I’ve wrestled with the thought of hope. As a teenager and young adult, I experienced hope through my encounters with Christ, who met me in my struggle and doubt.

When I have encountered moments of hopelessness, I often reflect on the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, “For I know well the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for woe, to give you a future of hope.” (Jer. 29:14) They first gave me comfort in high school when I was faced with the reality of accepting my parents’ divorce. As a sophomore, I was invited by a friend to participate in a summer camp where I had an opportunity to experience prayer, faith sharing, praise and worship, and silence. I recall being invited to sit alone with the Beloved, and I was asked to reflect on what I had been holding onto. I realized then that the Lord was inviting me to rest in his presence. I longed to be recognized and seen through the inner battles I had been carrying. I was holding onto guilt, shame, and doubt. Sitting in silence allowed me to face what was in the depths of my own heart and bring them before the Lord. I remember feeling an overwhelming sense of comfort. I had never taken the time to pray and sit alone with God before. This experience stirred in me a more profound desire to search for who God is and for where I could find hope. I realized I could not control my parent’s decision. a gift and a blessing, no matter my family’s conditions. ➤

I saw that I had been carrying my cross alone and had not allowed Jesus to carry it with me. Knowing that I did not walk in life alone, I found consolation and hope to continue forward in gratitude with Jesus. I was convinced the Lord had been protecting me through my different trials. I found hope in sharing with Him what was in my heart.

After that summer, I became curious about my faith journey and had a deeper yearning to learn and grow in my Catholic faith. But I was also faced with family members leaving the faith. In striving to live out the virtue of hope, it seemed that discouragement also lingered amidst my healing and challenges. As I navigated my way, I continued to receive the sacraments and remain open to the Lord's invitation to bear my crosses with Him. I desired to love my family members fully, but I felt hopeless, and at times, failed to trust that the Lord was going to take care of them. Mary is the Mother of Hope. I tried to look to her example when she faced difficult moments in her life. She remained silent so she could contemplate Jesus' words. I knew if I were willing to let go and to put my trust in Jesus, I would find the confidence to dwell in His promise as well. Through my prayer and continual striving to follow the Lord, I could rest in hope and be open to fulfill His plan.

As I grew in my faith, I also met a saint who has inspired me to not lose hope in my life. St. Josemaria Escriva was known for his witness of faith as a priest. Born in Spain in 1902, Josemaria grew up with five siblings. As a child, he lost three younger sisters, and shortly after, his family went into a financial crisis. His life was put to the test. Josemaria loved the Lord and searched for the deeper yearning he had to seek happiness and God's will for his life. He had faced suffering, pain, and loss. Through his doubts and unknowns, he knew where his hope pointed – to Someone greater. He understood that through faith is where he would find his happiness, and so, he answered his call to the priesthood.

What inspires me about St. Josemaria's life is that even though his own family suffered, he sought out hope through the purpose and the call the Lord had for him. In times of discouragement and feeling abandoned, he was sustained by the Lord's call to happiness. The saints like St. Josemaria Escriva accepted the trials that life brought, but never gave up. I am reminded of this when I receive the Lord's invitation every day to follow Him.

When I further reflect on hope today, I think about my vocation as a postulant with the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows. Through much prayer and devotion, like St. Josemaria, I have come to realize that hope lies in happiness. It is where the Lord wills His plan for me. It is living my daily life and trusting that God's plan is better than my own plan. There is a freedom in allowing God to take root in my life, knowing that he will fulfill His promises; I only need to trust.



*By Sr. Lisa Lapinsky, OLS*

## *What is Hope?*

The Bible tells us it is the confident expectation of what God has promised, and its strength is in His faithfulness. As Christians, we hope for what we cannot see – a better tomorrow, eternal life, happiness forever with our Lord; this is the essence of our faith. Hope is an act of the will; in spite of the challenges and difficulties we face in life, we choose to remain hopeful as we remain rooted in Christ.

In the world that we live in today, it seems more than ever that it is necessary for us to cling to hope. The world needs to hear the message of hope, and every person must know that hope belongs to them because of the promises made by God, given through the riches of Jesus Christ, His Son, who gave His life by the shedding of His precious blood for each one of us.

God gives hope to those who call upon Him. God gives hope to those in most need, those who are shunned in society, the lost, the broken, the brokenhearted, the forgotten, the suffering, and the outcast. God gives hope to the sinner.

In the fallen and broken world that we live in, many of us are susceptible to losing hope, maybe due to living a life trampled by the poor choices we make on our own, or from the consequences of others around us. This can cause us to believe we are forced to rely on our own strength. A lie we believe in our moment of weakness! We may have the tendency to want to give up, give in, to lose hope, and sadly, to ultimately despair. But we must not believe the lie! We must remember that God is the message of hope. The Good News is the message of hope.

Let us not hesitate to bring the message of hope to everyone we encounter. We live in a world that so desperately needs to hear the message of Christ. Let us bring hope into the world, and let it anchor deep within our hearts and in those we meet.

# WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT...

*come share your master's joy.*

MATTHEW 25:21



## *Sister Martinette Rivers, OLS*

August 29, 1936 — September 1, 2020

On September 1, 2020, Sister Martinette Rivers, OLS, a member of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows passed away at Our Lady of Sorrows Convent. She lost her battle with cancer, which she faced with strength, determination, and optimism. She was 84 years old.

Sister Martinette will be remembered by many for her exuberant personality, her joy and ability to entertain anyone, her acceptance and respect for all, especially those alone and abandoned. She loved her religious family and was very faithful to her prayer life and devotion to Our Lady.

Her love for life and friends filled her with joy and left a mark on so many people.

## *Sister Concetta Scipione, OLS*

October 27, 1927 — September 24, 2020

Sister Concetta Scipione, OLS, passed away on September 24, 2020 in Shreveport, LA at the age of 92. After a full life of service to others, her last few years were marked with physical and mental decline; however, this didn't prevent her from showing her gentle spirit, her generosity, and her enjoyment of company, of community life, and of visiting with friends.

Sister Concetta was born in Bisenti, Teramo, Italy, on October 27, 1927, the third of ten children; it was a family rich in love and care for each other. She joined the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows in Rimini, Italy, after World War II. She made her first vows in Coriano on June 14, 1952, and final vows on July 10, 1958.

Sr. Concetta spent most of her life serving children and adults with special needs. Her compassion and love for them helped her develop a selfless attitude of respect for these "special children", challenging them to develop and learn as much as they could, and protecting them with maternal and fearless strength.



## VOCATION SPOTLIGHT



### *There is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friend.*

*John 15: 13-2*

*By Sr. Nicole Cancel, OLS*

This scripture passage always stood out to me, from when I was young to the present day. I knew that this passage described the life I desired to live, to live as a best friend to Jesus, loving Him by laying down my life for Him and others. But I wasn't living that life when I was a child. After 6th grade, my family left the church, and after that, my greatest priority was "success". Was I successful enough at school, with my friends, in the opinions of my teachers, and in the opinion of family members? I wasn't focused on living my life for others, but for myself and my selfish ego.

However, when I was in 10th grade, one of the youngest teachers at my high school died suddenly; it was tragic. This shook the way I viewed the world and my own life. How could God let this happen? At that point, though, I wasn't even praying, so I didn't know what to think or believe. One of my best friends was bold enough to talk to me about Jesus, the Church, and our earthly mission to lay down our lives for Him and for others. I knew I wanted to live the Christian life he was describing with my whole heart, but it was difficult to reorient my life. I wanted to pray and go to Mass, but I didn't start attempting to establish a relationship with Christ until I entered college.

Once I got to college, I knew what I wanted to do and who I wanted to be. I entered RCIA, so I could get confirmed, and I started attending a Bible study to learn more about Christ in the Scriptures, but I was still struggling with the orientation of my heart. It was torn between wanting to be "successful" in the world's eyes, while serving myself on the one hand, and living a Christ-filled life on the other. The Scriptures say you cannot serve both God and mammon. I found this out the hard way, because that is what I was trying to do. Except in this case, the mammon wasn't money, it was me. On Sunday, I was going to Mass and attending Bible study, but as soon as I left, I continued my self-serving ways, caring about nobody's happiness but my own. This was reflected in the way I treated my friends, family, strangers, and my overall attitude towards life. This didn't last though, because halfway through college, my self-serving decisions left me feeling empty, purposeless, without direction, and never more miserable. One day, I felt impelled to go to the chapel in our Newman Center, take out my rosary, and start praying. After one decade, I collapsed into tears.

Years of trying to just please myself wasn't making me happy or fulfilled. I was hurting others, and hurting myself. Why gain the whole world if you lose your soul?

I cried because I knew I was losing my soul.

But that inspiration to take out my rosary and start praying changed my life. Our Blessed Mother Mary came into my life that day, and I ended up doing the same thing the next two days: go to the chapel, pray one decade of the rosary, break down crying, repeat. After 3 days of praying the rosary, I summoned the courage to go to a priest I trusted and told him everything I was going through. I wanted to change my heart and my habits, but I didn't know how. He asked me what I started doing differently that led me to that meeting with him. I said I started to pray the rosary. He said it was Mary's intercession that led me to this meeting, and it was her intercession that was going to lead me to God's will. Since then, I made time every morning to pray, and I always made sure to pray my rosary.

I can trace the finding of my vocation to Mary, because less than a year later, I started having thoughts of consecrating myself to the Lord. I saw photos of sisters, heard testimonies, and I thought, "That's it! That's the life I want to live!" For me, I wanted to lay down my whole life. Even after reorienting my life, making different choices, and having a life devoted to prayer, I knew I wanted more. I wanted to give my entire life. I started attending spiritual direction, and in my discernment, I realized this desire wasn't coming from me. God was calling me to religious life.

The biggest test of my faith and vocation was telling those I love. This was a decision nobody saw coming (not even myself), so there were many mixed reactions. I even lost some of the people closest to me. This was one of the most difficult periods of my life, but it put my heart in focus. Who did I want to lay down my life for? It wasn't for myself, it was for the Lord, the Church, and God's people. Laying down your life means laying down your life.

I am grateful to have found a home in the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows. I found out about them through an Imagine sisters post on Facebook. By reading the charism of the community online, I found a familiarity in it as if my heart immediately understood it. I found a home in Blessed Elisabetta's words to her sisters. I do not have a doubt in my mind that I am where the Lord wants me to be. I don't feel the same restlessness I had when I was scurrying trying to find happiness. I have finally found my home with Jesus Crucified in the community of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows, and for my vocation, I am eternally grateful.

# First Profession of Vows



On June 13, 2020, Sr. Nicole, OLS, Sr. Lisa, OLS, Sr. Liza, OLS, and Sr. Hira professed first professional vows as Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows at Saint Joseph Catholic Church in Shreveport, Louisiana.





## *Entrance to the Novitiate*

On July 21, 2020, Lydia and Angela entered the novitiate at OLS Motherhouse in Shreveport, Louisiana.





***We give thanks to God always for all of you,  
remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly.***

***(1 Thessalonians 1:2)***

*The generosity of many of our benefactors and friends makes it possible for us to live our consecrated life and mission to God's people. The Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows are filled with gratitude for all our benefactors who have enabled us to renovate our convent in Lafayette and build a new chapel.*

*Scripture tells us that "Every good gift comes from above" (James 1:17), so our prayer is that of thanksgiving to the Lord who has always been faithful to us and has fulfilled all of our needs. To our benefactors, we humbly say "thank you."*



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*Hope sees the invisible, feels the  
intangible and achieves the impossible.*

SAINT TERESA OF CALCUTTA

