



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©
* Knights of Malta *

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Chancellor's Update

The Risen Savior - Our Hope

This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it (Ps. 117.24). This recitation in the Gradual of the Easter Sunday Mass reminds us why we celebrate: Christ has ransomed us from the punishment of the sin of Adam, He has conquered death and He has reopened to us the gates of heaven. We rejoice in the hope of our resurrected bodies in eternal life.

Several months ago our present Holy Father, Benedict XVI, gave us an Encyclical **Spe Salvi**, in which he discussed the virtue of Hope. Some excerpts follow. "Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, by virtue of which we can face our present." #1

"Paul reminds the Ephesians that before their encounter with Christ they were *without hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12)*... They were *without God* and consequently found themselves in a dark world facing a dark future... Christians have a future: it is not that they know the details of what awaits them, but they know in general terms that their life will not end in emptiness... The Gospel is a communication that makes things happen and is life-changing. The dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life." #2

"The true philosopher who really *did know* how to point out the path of life was highly sought after... We see clearly what both educated and simple people found in Christ: he tells us who man truly is and what a man must do in order to be truly human. He shows us the way, and this way is the truth. He himself is both the way and the truth, and therefore he is also the life which all of us are seeking. He also shows us the way beyond death; only someone able to do this is a true teacher of life... He himself has walked this path, he has descended into the kingdom of death, he has conquered death, and he has returned to accompany us now and to give us the certainty that, together with him, we can find a way through. The realization that there is One who even in death accompanies me, and comforts me –this was the new 'hope' that arose over the life of believers." #6

"We want life itself, true life, untouched even by death; yet at the same time we do not know the thing towards which we feel driven... This unknown 'thing' is the true 'hope' which drives us, and at the same time the fact that it is unknown is the cause of all forms of despair and also of all efforts... directed towards worldly authenticity and human authenticity. The term 'eternal life' is intended to give a name to this known 'unknown'." #12

"Once the truth of the hereafter had been rejected, it would then be a question of establishing the truth of the here and now. The critique of Heaven is transformed into the critique of earth, the critique of theology into the critique of politics." #20

"Man needs God, otherwise he remains without hope." #23

"What may we hope? And what may we not hope?" #24

"Greater and lesser hopes keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain... God is the

foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety. His Kingdom is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his Kingdom is present wherever he is loved and wherever his love reaches us. His love alone gives us the possibility of soberly persevering day by day, without ceasing to be spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect. His love is at the same time our guarantee of the existence of what we only vaguely sense and which we... await: a life that is 'truly' life." #31

"When no one listens to me any more, **God still listens to me**. When I can no longer talk to anyone or call upon anyone, **I can always talk to God**. When there is no longer anyone to help me deal with a need or expectation that goes beyond the human capacity for hope, **he can help me**. When I have been plunged into complete solitude, **if I pray I am never totally alone**." #32

"Hope gives us the courage to place ourselves on the side of good even in seemingly hopeless situations, aware that, as far as the external course of history is concerned, the power of sin will continue to be a terrible presence." #36

"A world which has to create its own justice is a world without hope." #42

"A world without God is a world without hope. Only God can create justice. And faith gives us the certainty that he does so. The image of the Last Judgment... is an image of hope... It is an image that evokes responsibility... **God is justice and creates justice. This is our consolation and our hope**. And in his justice there is also grace. This we know by **turning our gaze to the crucified and risen Christ...** **Grace does not cancel out justice**. It does not make wrong into right. It is not a sponge which wipes everything away, so that whatever someone has done on earth ends up being of equal value... Evildoers, in the end, do not sit at the table at the eternal banquet beside their victims without distinction, as though nothing had happened. Plato says that in the end souls will stand naked before the judge. It no longer matters what they once were in history, but only what they are in truth." #44

"**With death, our life-choice becomes definitive-our life stands before the judge**. Our choice in the course of an entire life takes on a certain shape." #45

"St. Paul says that Christian life is built upon a common foundation: Jesus Christ. This foundation endures. If we have stood firm on this foundation and built our life upon it, we know that it cannot be taken away from us even in death." #46

"The judgment of God is hope, both because it is justice and because it is grace. If it were merely grace, making all earthly things cease to matter, God would still owe us an answer to the question about justice-the crucial question that we ask of history and of God. If it were merely justice, in the end it could bring only fear to us all. The incarnation of God in Christ has so closely linked the two together-**judgment and grace**-that justice is firmly established: we all work out our salvation **with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12)**. Nevertheless grace allows us all to hope, and to go trustfully to meet the Judge." #47

As we meditate on the meaning of Our Lord's Death and Resurrection, and its particular meaning for us in our lives, we turn to a centuries old prayer of the Church. "O my God, relying on Thy infinite goodness and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of Thy grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer."

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