

A LIGHT  
IN THE NIGHT



Pope Francis



A LIGHT  
IN THE NIGHT

Meditations on Hope

**NCP**  
NEW CITY PRESS

Published in the United States by New City Press  
136 Madison Avenue, Floors 5 & 6, PMB #4290  
New York, NY 10016  
[www.newcitypress.com](http://www.newcitypress.com)

Pope Francis  
A Light in the Night – Meditations on Hope

First published in Italian as *Una Luce Nella Notte:  
Meditazioni Sulla Speranza*

© 2024 Dicastero per la Comunicazione  
Libreria Editrice Vaticana  
00120 Città del Vaticano  
[www.libreriaeditricevaticana.va](http://www.libreriaeditricevaticana.va)  
[www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

Cover Photo: © Neneo | Dreamstime.com

Library of Congress Control Number: 2024945521

ISBN: 978-1-56548-643-0 (paper)  
ISBN: 978-1-56548-650-8 (e-book)

3rd Printing, March 2025

Vatican translations used with permission  
Chapter titles are by the editor

Printed in the United States of America

# Content

Introduction.....	7
Editor's Note .....	11
Hope, the “Little” Virtue.....	13
Is My Heart an Open Drawer? .....	14
The Nativity Scene Conveys Hope .....	16
Demons of Noon .....	19
Pandora's Box .....	21
The Powerlessness of Idols .....	23
The False Seers.....	25
Feeding Hope with Prayer .....	27
Mother of Hope .....	29
She “Stood By” .....	31
With This Poem I Awaken Hope.....	33
Lighting the Torch of Hope.....	35
Do Not Surrender to the Night.....	37
Rachel Does Not Want Consolation.....	39
Life is Beautiful .....	42

The Saints: Witnesses and Companions of Hope....	44
Dust That Aspires to Heaven.....	46
Hope, Strength of the Martyrs.....	48
The Helmet of Hope .....	50
People of Springtime .....	52
Hoping Against Hope .....	54
Make All Things New.....	56
A Light in the Darkness.....	58
Sources.....	61

# Introduction

The Jubilee of 2025, a holy year that I wanted to be dedicated to the theme “Pilgrims of Hope,” is a propitious occasion to reflect on this fundamental and decisive Christian virtue, especially in times like the ones we are living, in which the piecemeal third world war that is unfolding before our eyes can lead us to adopt attitudes of dark despair and poorly concealed cynicism.

Hope, on the other hand, is a gift and a task for every Christian. It is a gift because it is God who offers it to us. To hope, in fact, is not a mere act of optimism, like when we sometimes hope to pass a college exam (“Let’s hope we can do it.”) or when we hope for good weather for a trip out of town on a Sunday in spring (“Let’s hope the weather is good.”). No. To hope is to wait for something that has already been given to us: salvation in the eternal and infinite love of God, that love, that salvation, that gives flavor to our life and that constitutes the cornerstone on which the world remains standing, despite all the wickedness and evil caused by our sins as men and women. To hope, therefore, is to welcome this gift that God offers us every day. To hope is to savor the wonder of being loved, sought, and

desired by a God who did not hide in his impenetrable skies but became flesh and blood, history and days, to share our fate.

Hope is also a task that Christians have the duty to cultivate and make fruitful for the good of all their brothers and sisters. The task is to remain faithful to the gift received—as Madeleine Delbrêl, a French woman of the twentieth century, rightly highlighted—capable of bringing the Gospel to the outskirts, geographical and existential, of Paris in the middle of the last century, which was marked by de-Christianization. Madeleine Delbrêl wrote: “Christian Hope assigns us that narrow ridgeline, that frontier where our vocation demands that we choose, every day and every hour, to be faithful to the faithfulness of God for us.” God is faithful to us, and our task is to respond to this faithfulness. But be careful: It is not we who generate this faithfulness. It is a gift from God that works in us if we allow ourselves to be shaped by his strength of love, the Holy Spirit who acts as a breath of inspiration in our hearts. It is up to us, therefore, to invoke this gift: “Lord, grant me to be faithful to you in hope!”

I said that hope is a gift from God and a task for Christians. And to live hope, you need a “mysticism with open eyes,” as the great theologian Johann Baptist Metz called it: knowing how to see, everywhere, attestations of hope, the irruption of the possible into

the impossible, grace where it would seem that sin has eroded all trust. Some time ago I had the opportunity to talk with two exceptional witnesses of hope, two fathers: one Israeli, Rami, and one Palestinian, Bassam. Both lost their daughters in the conflict that has bloodied the Holy Land for too many decades now. Nevertheless, in the name of their pain, of the suffering experienced for the death of their two little daughters—Smadar and Abir—they became friends, indeed brothers. They live forgiveness and reconciliation as a concrete, prophetic, and authentic gesture. Meeting them gave me so much hope. Their friendship and brotherhood have taught me that hatred, in practice, may not have the last word. The reconciliation that they live as individuals, a prophecy of a greater and more widened reconciliation, constitutes an invincible sign of hope. And hope opens us to unthinkable horizons.

I invite every reader of this text to a simple but concrete gesture: In the evening, before going to bed, retrace the events experienced and the encounters had; go in search of a sign of hope in the day just gone by: an unexpected smile, an act of kindness observed at school or at work, a gesture of help, even a small one: Hope is truly a “childlike virtue,” as Charles Péguy wrote. And we need to become children again, with our eyes amazed at the world, to meet it, know it, and appreciate it. Let us train ourselves to recognize hope.

We will then be amazed at how much good exists in the world. And our hearts will light up with hope. We will be able to thus be beacons of the future for those around us.

*Francisco*

Vatican City, October 2, 2024

## Editor's Note

**T**he theme of Hope, which Pope Francis has repeatedly examined, while also making it the subject of an extensive catechesis, offers an opportunity to reflect on what he calls a humble, minor, yet fundamental virtue.

This short anthology, which takes its starting point from a poem by Charles Péguy, begins with a meditation on Christmas and the Nativity scene and then dwells on the sloth so feared by monks, a rereading of the Pandora's Box episode, the impotence of idols, and the ineffectiveness of false seers. Christian hope is something else. It is nourished by prayer and daily choices, by the example of Mary under the cross, and by the strength of the saints and martyrs. Cultivating hope means not giving up in the night, not being satisfied with worn-out words of consolation, preferring spring to autumn—as the Pope poetically states—and making all things new.



## Hope, the “Little” Virtue

The French writer Charles Péguy, at the beginning of his poem on hope, spoke of the three theological virtues—faith, hope, and charity—as three sisters who walk together:

Hope, the little one, walks beside her two older  
sisters, practically unseen....

Yet she, the little one, drags everything along.

Because Faith only sees what exists.

And Charity only loves what exists.

But Hope loves what will be....

She is the one who makes the others keep walking.

She is the one who leads them on,

and makes them all walk together.

*(The Portico of the Mystery of the Second Virtue)*<sup>1</sup>

I, too, am convinced that hope is humble, little, yet essential. Think for a moment. How can we live without hope? What would our days be like? Hope is the salt of our daily lives.

---

1. Charles Péguy, *Il portico del mistero della seconda virtù* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1978), 17–19.

## Is My Heart an Open Drawer?

When we speak of hope, often it refers to what is not in man's power to realize, that which is invisible. In fact, what we hope for goes beyond our strength and our perception. But the birth of Christ, which inaugurates redemption, speaks to us of a different hope, a dependable, visible, and understandable hope, because it is founded in God. He comes into the world and gives us the strength to walk with him. God walks with us in Jesus, and walking with him toward the fullness of life gives us the strength to dwell in the present in a new, albeit arduous, way. Thus, for a Christian, to hope means the certainty of being on a journey with Christ toward the Father who awaits us. Hope is never still; hope is always journeying, and it makes us journey. This hope, which the Child of Bethlehem gives us, offers a destination, a sure, ongoing goal, salvation of mankind, and blessedness to those who trust in a merciful God. Saint Paul summarizes all this with the expression, "in this hope we were saved" (Rom 8:24). In other words, walking in this world, with hope, we are saved. Here, each one of us can ask ourselves the question: Am I walking with hope or

is my interior life static, closed? Is my heart a locked drawer or a drawer open to the hope which enables me to walk—not alone—but with Jesus?

## The Nativity Scene Conveys Hope

**I**n Christian homes, during the season of Advent, the Nativity scene is arranged according to the tradition which dates back to Saint Francis of Assisi. In its simple way, the Nativity scene conveys hope; each one of the characters is immersed in this atmosphere of hope.

First of all, we note the place in which Jesus was born: Bethlehem. It is a small village in Judea where, thousands of years earlier, David, the shepherd boy chosen by God to be the king of Israel, was born. Bethlehem is not a capital city, and for this reason, it is preferred by Divine Providence, who loves to act through the little ones and the humble. In that birthplace was born the highly anticipated “Son of David,” Jesus, in whom the hope of God and the hope of man meet.

Then we look to Mary, Mother of Hope. With her “yes,” she opened the door of our world to God. Her maiden’s heart was full of hope, wholly enlivened by faith; thus, God chose her, and she believed in his word. She, who for nine months was the Ark of the new and eternal Covenant, contemplates the Child in

the grotto and sees in him the love of God who comes to save his people and the whole of humanity.

Next to Mary is Joseph, a descendant of Jesse and of David. He, too, believed in the words of the angel, and looking at Jesus in the manger, he reflects on the fact that this Child has come from the Holy Spirit and that God himself commanded him to call [the Child] “Jesus.” In that name, there is hope for every man and woman because, through that son of woman, God will save mankind from death and from sin. This is why it is important to contemplate the Nativity scene!

In the Nativity scene there are also shepherds, who represent the humble and poor who await the Messiah, the “consolation of Israel” (Lk 2:25), and the “redemption of Jerusalem” (2:38). In this Child they see the realization of the promises and hope that the salvation of God will finally arrive for each of them. Those who trust in their own certainties, especially material, do not await God’s salvation. Let us keep this in mind: our own assurance will not save us. The only certainty that will save us is that of hope in God. It will save us because it is strong and enables us to journey in life with joy, with the will to do good, with the will to attain eternal happiness. The little ones, the shepherds, instead trust in God, hope in him, and rejoice when they recognize in that Child the sign indicated by the angels (cf. Lk 2:12).

The very choir of angels proclaims from on high the great design that the Child fulfills: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased” (2:14). Christian hope is expressed in praise and gratitude to God, who has initiated his kingdom of love, justice, and peace.



## FOCOLARE MEDIA

*Enkindling the Spirit of Unity*

The New City Press book you are holding in your hands is one of the many resources produced by Focolare Media, which is a ministry of the Focolare Movement in North America. The Focolare is a worldwide community of people who feel called to bring about the realization of Jesus' prayer: "That all may be one" (see John 17:21).

Focolare Media wants to be your primary resource for connecting with people, ideas, and practices that build unity. Our mission is to provide content that empowers people to grow spiritually, improve relationships, engage in dialogue, and foster collaboration within the Church and throughout society.



Visit [www.focolaremedia.com](http://www.focolaremedia.com) to learn more about all of New City Press's books, our award-winning magazine *Living City*, videos, podcasts, events, and free resources.

**NCP**

**NEW CITY PRESS**