

## **Bring Hope to a Hurting World**

Intro: **We live in a messy world; one might even say a dysfunctional world.** Sin has marred the beauty of God's creation. All human beings suffer as a result of personal sin and the sins of our ancestors. Yet God continues to reach out to his people **to lift up fallen human nature, to show them the way home to God.** God revealed himself more fully first through the Jewish community and then through the Christian community. **We believe** that Jesus is the **promised Messiah, the Son of God.** The **I AM sayings** of Jesus remind us that he is the **Light** of the World, the Good **Shepherd**, the **Bread** of Life, the **Way, the Truth and the Life**, and the **Resurrection** and the **Life**. Thus Jesus is the **ultimate hope** for the problems of our world.

Into this messy world, you and I are called to be **ministers of hope.** The odds seem overwhelming at times. There is no magic solution to bring Jesus to our troubled world. Yet we **all must persevere at it.** Jesus did it in his time. We must do it in our time.

**What is hope? Hope is confident expectation that God is on our side and is working on our behalf.**

**Hope is Christian optimism grounded in God's faithfulness.** We all know what hope feels like. **"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope. But do it with gentleness and reverence."** 1 Pet. 3:25-16

**Hope** is planting a sapling **tree** that we trust will be around long after we are gone. It is confidence that ultimately God is in charge of his creation and rewards those who love him. St. Paul writes: "For those who love God, all things work together unto good according to God's purpose." **Rom. 8:28**

The source of **our hope lies in God.** Hope and encouragement go together. Together they can bid farewell to fear.

Though the world can be an **ugly place to live in**, it is nevertheless filled with **the glory of God.** It takes eyes of faith to see this and to believe in God's loving presence and power among us.

What helps us see this is to reflect **upon the good people** who have gone before us, saintly men and women of **faith who did God's will joyfully.**

The **history of Christianity** offers us tremendous role models of men and women who heard the call of God and reached out to the needs of society. They brought **hope and encouragement to the people of their day.**

**Founders** of religious orders in the Church. St. Francis, St. Ignatius of Loyola, **St. Paul of the Cross**, St. Katherine Drexel, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. They each had to overcome many obstacles to establish their communities. They **persevered in their mission to proclaim the gospel and to assist the needy**. They offered hope and encouragement. I would like to highlight a few **Passionists** who touched the lives of hurting people.

**St. Paul of the Cross** - Zealous preacher, mystic and spiritual director in 1700s . Paul preached about the love of God in the **passion of Jesus to rich and poor alike**.

**Blessed Dominic Barberi** - He labored for **Christian Unity** in England. Dominic received John Henry Newman in the Roman Catholic Church in 1845.

**Blessed Eugene Bossilkov** - He was a bishop in Bulgaria when Communism took over that country and he headed a resistance movement. He was executed in 1952.

The list of brave men and women who **defy evil emperors and kings** is long and spans all centuries of Church history.

In our country we think of **Dorothy Day** and her Catholic Worker movement. A convert to Catholicism, she was a **social activist** labored for the poor of society.

The Passionist Province of St. Paul of the Cross sponsors the **Passionist Volunteers** in Jamaica, WI. They work with children and adults teaching the most basic elements of hygiene, child care and religion.

Another group of adult volunteer to serve with **Fr. Rick Frechette in Haiti** for short periods of time. **Doctors and nurses** work in Fr. Rick's clinic for weeks at a time.

A woman from **Scranton** goes down 3-4 times a year at her own expense. Two of our associates at St. Paul visited Haiti for two weeks last February.

My purpose here was to demonstrate that when people reach out to fulfill the mission that God has given them there is **enlightenment, hope and courage** for their followers.

**CNN Heroes - Everyday people changing the world.**

In the fall of **2010 CNN** did a show where they profiled **10 people** who have made a notable impact on society. They came from many countries and various walks of life. As **warriors against injustice**, these heroes used

intelligence, organization, inspiration and determination to bring help to innumerable people.

These heroes **demonstrate hope and courage** to people everywhere. It is contagious.

**Here are a few modern day prophetic people** who inspire us by their words and deeds. We honor in a special way **Popes John XXIII and John Paul II** recently canonized. Their writings helped to guide the Church at a critical period of history.

**Pope John was a man of hope and courage, not a prophet of doom and gloom. He wrote timely encyclicals. One was *Pacem in Terris*.** This radically affected Catholic social teaching not only on war and peace, but on church-state relations, women's rights, religious freedom, and international relations. (*Journey of a Soul*)

Pope John had the courage to call a Vatican Council against the advice of many Vatican officials. A Vatican official told the pope it would be "absolutely impossible" to open the Second Vatican Council by 1963. "**Fine, we'll open it in 1962.**" And he did.

Pope John managed to keep a **sense of humor** in the midst of his heavy labors. Not long after he was elected pope, Blessed John was walking in the streets of Rome. A woman passed him and said to her friend, "My God, he's so fat." Overhearing what she said, he turned around and replied, "**Madame, I trust you understand that the papal conclave is not exactly a beauty contest.**"

We knew him as the **smiling Pope**. He loved to tell jokes. "**How many people work in the Vatican?**" "**About half of them.**" **Pope St. John XXIII – a man who engenders hope to all.**

**Pope John Paul II** was the **first Polish Pope** and the first non Italian Pope in over 400 years. He lived through the Nazi regime and then the Russian occupation in Poland. His strength and courage helped **to end communist rule in Poland** and much of Europe.

At **age 58** he ascended to the Papacy and served over 26 years. He was the most traveled pope in history and visited **129 countries**. His many encyclicals helped to shape the post Vatican II era and called people to holiness of life in their respective vocations.

**John Paul beatified 1340 people and canonized 483** saints, more than the combined tally of his predecessors of the preceding five centuries.

John Paul significantly improved the Catholic Church's relations **with Judaism, Islam, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Anglican Church.**

As an old man, John Paul personified respect for the elderly and infirm. He carried his crosses bravely. He reminded us: "**Do not be afraid**". JP2 was a courageous man.

**Pope Francis** was elected in 2013. He chose his papal name in honor of St. Francis of Assisi. Francis is the **first Jesuit pope**, the first from the Americas, and the **first non-European pope since 741.**

Pope Francis is noted for his **humility, his concern for the poor, and his commitment to dialog** as a way to build bridges between people of all backgrounds, beliefs and faiths.

To say that Pope Francis is **joyful and hopeful** is an understatement. He radiates confidence in God who is leading him and the Church. **He inspires all that he meets.**

Pope Francis is known for having a simpler and less formal approach to the papacy, most notably by choosing to reside in the **Vatican Guest House** rather than in the papal apartments as his predecessors.

"I see the church as a **field hospital after battle.** What the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and **to warm the hearts of the faithful**; it needs nearness, proximity. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugar! **You have to heal wounds.** Then you can talk about everything else."  
Pope Francis

**These three popes are men of hope and courage and not doom and gloom.** They remained optimists in the midst of the decay of society and attacks against the Church. The world is in need **men and women of hope and vision** who can challenge the status quo of materialism, greed and indifference.

There are **many unsung heroes** in every city who dedicate their lives for particular causes. They receive no acclaim or rewards. They simply want **to make a difference** in the lives of people they serve. **They are people of hope.** And they inspire us.

Some workers and volunteers in the field are not believers as we are. But they live out the message of Jesus when he said: "**Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to me.**" Mt. 25: 40.

You and I are asked to **bring hope and compassion to our hurting world**. We will not go to Africa or foreign country. We will not be called to do a great mission for the Church. But we can work for the **Lord right in our sphere of influence – family, neighborhood, church**. Mother Teresa's response to a reporter: **"I just love them one at a time."**

It is not the quantity of our labor that is important to God but the **quality – how much love we put into our actions. When we say and do the right thing for the right reason, God is pleased and rewards our efforts**. You and I can **make a difference** in the world around us just as the people I spoke about did. **Let us bring hope to our hurting world.**