

So many new faces, I hope I meet some of them, I do hope they will like my talk, I hope I look OK, I really hope, oh I hope you all really enjoy this day, and I hope that we have something wonderful for dinner, I hope commuters had a good drive. There is just so much to hope for. I hope my granddaughter wins her softball game today. I hope you slept well last night, I hope you had a good breakfast, I hope...

Hello, I am Sandy Thompson, district III formation team member and member of the Holy Family Fraternity in Norway, ME. As I prepared for this weekend I found myself very aware of how often I use the word hope. I hope you are well, I hope you have a good day, I hope it doesn't snow, I hope the traffic isn't too bad, and the list goes on.

Slide 1

St Francis prayed for hope, certain hope, some translations of the prayer say sure hope. I don't think my list of hopes is the hope he prayed for.

So, let us begin...In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Most High and glorious God,

Bring light to the darkness of my heart.

Give me right faith,

certain hope, perfect charity.

Lord, give me insight and wisdom,

so, I can always discern

Your holy and true will. Amen

Read slowly & prayerfully

Pause – right Faith, **Certain Hope** and perfect Charity –

I believe that at this point in his life St. Francis had faith, hope and charity. But in his journey to be more like Jesus, he must have known it was

imperfect faith, hope and charity. Much like each of us here today, I believe that we all have faith, hope and charity but speaking for myself. It is lacking, is not perfect as our Lord is perfect. Each of these, right faith, certain hope and perfect charity is a talk of its own. Today, I am here to share thoughts and insights on **certain hope**.

Slide 2

Google says Certain hope is confident expectation, an assurance of God's faithfulness and goodness. A firm and unwavering belief in a positive future outcome. Webster defines it [Archaic] to trust; to rely, to want and to expect Francis prayed for certain hope....

To prepare for today, I decided to journey with Francis through some of the parables asking to hear with his ears. To hear the words Christ spoke, words that gave him that yearning for Certain Hope. Of the many parables told by Jesus, for me, the one that sparked some hope, that stood out as an example of a person with certain and sure hope, that unwavering belief in a positive outcome was Matthew 13: 1-9

Make yourself comfortable and listen to the parable of the Sower.

(Reader) [Matthew 13:1-9](#)

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea.

Such large crowds gathered around him

that he got into a boat and sat down,

and the whole crowd stood along the shore.

And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying:

“A sower went out to sow.

And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path,

and birds came and ate it up.

Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil.

It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep,

and when the sun rose it was scorched,

and it withered for lack of roots.

Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it.

But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit,
a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.
Whoever has ears ought to hear.”

Francis would certainly have been familiar with this parable; might the Sower have come to mind as he prayed that day before the San Damiano Cross. Was he thinking of those times in life when seeds had fallen on the paths of his life? What might he have been remembering as he prayed in earnest for right faith, certain hope and perfect charity. Now I really can't tell you what he was thinking but I can tell you about where this walk through the parable with St. Francis took me.

For me, the Sower is the embodiment of **certain and sure hope**, that firm and unwavering belief in positive future outcomes, the expectation of good fruits.

Jesus tells the crowd that the Sower dropped seed on 4 different growing conditions. The path, rocky ground, thorns or thicket and rich soil.

1. **Seeds that fall on the path** – exposed, eaten by the birds - no chance of sprouting roots.
but he continues to sow.
2. **Seeds that fall on the rocky ground** – Sprout and grow but there is no depth. The roots wither under the heat of the day.
and he still continues to sow.
3. **Seeds that fall among thorns** – Choked by the thorns, tries to grow but the thorns get in the way

In the ways of the world he is not good at sowing. He might even be considered a reckless and wasteful Sower. However, the Sower doesn't stop spreading seeds He has that certain hope, firm and unwavering. He believes there is better soil to come. So, the Sower continues to sow his seeds.

All of these moments, that seem to lack 'fruit', appear lost on the Sower. He continues his journey spreading seeds. He has a sure hope, that knowing hope. And one day... Now just an aside.

IF our heavenly Father is the one sowing the seeds, He knows that there is better soil in Francis, he is more than the son of a wealthy merchant, he is more than the merry maker, the town troubadour, he is more than a wanna be knight and just like Our Father knows the real Francis, He also knows each of us, like Francis, we are made for something greater.

Our Father knows the abundant fruit that will come from our rich soil. And I believe that He knows our fraternities and the abundant fruit that can come from nurturing our fraternal soil.

And one day...

4. **The Sower's seeds falls on good soil** – the soil has been prepared, it is rich and fertile, open to life. That fertile ground is a heart ready to receive. As I reflect on this, I spend time thinking of Francis kneeling before the cross. Praising the God he is learning to love, yearning for more.

To be enlightened

To be given right faith, certain hope and perfect charity.

The wisdom to discern His will.

Slide 3

When I reflect on Francis praying before the San Damiano Cross, in my mind he is always kneeling. However, this image captures for me what I sense Francis is yearning and praying for.

Pause for a moment...Gaze on the image. How does this image speak to you?

Allow some sharing from the group (The apostle John leaning on the chest of our Lord at the Last Supper)

The stories that we know about Francis and his life are stories that could easily fall on the path, on rocky ground and in the thorns. For me...

1. The path. That time before he prepared for war – the troubadour Francis, the Francis who preferred good times, good food and good revelry with his friends. The seed is consumed in the fun and feasting with friends. This Path that Francis is on does not allow time for the seed to grow. It's trampled in the ways of the world.
2. The rocky ground. He is seeking something, someone but he still doesn't fully understand the internal desire for something, someone that he doesn't know. There is still no depth, his faith springs up but there is no foundation. He is still desiring to make his dream of becoming a knight real. He still doesn't know that he is serving the slave and not the master. This rocky path allows seeds to sprout but there are still rocks and boulders in the way, no place for the roots to go deep.
3. The thorns, His time as prisoner, his father's desire and impatience to have the old Francis back. These moments are choking the voice of the Master. Francis trying to find his place in the world and the thorns are stifling the growth.

None of these paths are lost on the sower...In my reflection on this journey, the soil is getting better, richer. Anyone who has ever worked the ground for a garden knows it requires many seasons to get to the place of rich, fertile soil.

4. Then comes the kiss, the leper, what was foul, what was bitter is now sweet. His heart is ready to receive. The Sower's seeds have fallen on rich and fertile soil, and as the seed of God is growing and taking root in Francis, others are noticing, wanting what it is that he has.

What will eventually become the Order of Friars Minor begins growing. Not only was his heart ready to receive the Lord, it was ready for companions.

“AND AFTER THAT THE LORD GAVE ME BROTHERS, NO ONE SHOWED ME WHAT I HAD TO DO, BUT THE SAME MOST HIGH REVEALED TO ME THAT I HAD TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE FORM OF THE HOLY GOSPEL.”

He looks to scripture for direction, he is seeing and experiencing the savior in all of creation. Their numbers are growing. The rich soil is producing fruit a hundred, or sixty or thirty-fold. We too are some of the fruit from the Sower's seeds falling on good soil. We are part of the hundred, or sixty or thirty-fold. And, our still unknown brothers and sisters, the ones being called to be a part of our fraternities are also part of the abundant fruit, the gift of rich soil.

As Francis prays before the cross of San Damiano, he is praying for the hope of the Sower, that certain and sure hope, and 800 years after his death we are the fruit of that hope. Fruit of a certain hope prayed for, so long ago.

Francis praying before the San Damiano Cross is a beautiful example of how we should pray. He glorifies the Father... **Most High and glorious God,**

he acknowledges his needs... **Bring light to the darkness of my heart. Give me right faith, certain hope, perfect charity. Lord, give me insight and wisdom,** he shares why he is asking... **so, I can always discern Your holy and true will.**

I encourage you to take this simple and beautiful prayer with you to Adoration. To pray it with the same yearning. Present a heart of rich soil to

receive the fruits. The fruit of certain and sure hope. These are the fruits that will attract brothers and sisters.

The Sower continues to sow, he doesn't stop dropping his seeds for he is the image of **certain and sure hope**, of that firm and unwavering belief in positive future outcomes, the expectation of good fruits. You, and your fraternity are the rich soil waiting to welcome fruit in abundance.

Imagine yourself as Francis, leaning on the Lord, praying from the depths of your heart, no longer distracted by the merriment of friends, the unknown yearnings, the expectations of family, jobs and friends. Your heart is open to seeds dropped by the Sower.

Bring light to the darkness of my heart. Give me right faith, certain hope, perfect charity.

Thank you

QUESTIONS FOR SHARING WITH THE PERSON NEXT TO YOU (IF TIME ALLOWS)

Slide 4

The Path

- Can you recall times when God's word didn't take root in your life—perhaps because you were distracted, closed off, or resistant?
- What might have caused the message to be snatched away before it could grow?

Rocky Ground

- Have there been moments when you received God's word with joy, but it didn't last due to hardship or lack of depth?
- What challenges made it hard to stay rooted in faith during those times?

Among Thorns

- Are there seasons when worries, busyness, or worldly desires choked your spiritual growth?
- What “thorns” do you recognize in your life today?

Good Soil

- When have you felt spiritually nourished and fruitful—where God’s word truly transformed you?
- What helped create that “good soil” in your heart?