

Saved in Hope

ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF POPE BENEDICT XVI



Why Encyclicals for Formation

- ▶ What
 - ▶ letter, usually to the faithful
 - ▶ accessible, understandable (i.e. not technical)
- ▶ Why
 - ▶ tool for formation....short, focused
 - ▶ instruction on faith, course correction...
 - ▶ supremely important
- ▶ How
 - ▶ leads to prayer and reflection
 - ▶ transforming



Whereas St. John Paul II, *The Splendor of Truth* is “To all the Bishops of the Catholic Church Regarding Certain Fundamental Questions of the Church’s Moral Teaching”

In this encyclical we are not treated to a rehash of the catechism but a reasoned, thoughtful, very human account of a man who was schooled by hope and lived by hope and who wishes to share his reflections on hope so that we too may become people of hope.

Review the Table of Contents as an overview of the presentation.

What is Hope?

- ▶ We are offered Redemption “in the sense that we are given hope.”
- ▶ This hope allows us to face an arduous present:
 - ▶ if it leads toward a goal
 - ▶ if we can be sure of this goal
 - ▶ this goal is great enough to justify the journey
- ▶ “What sort of hope could ever justify that statement that, on the basis of that hope and simply because it exists, we are redeemed?” (!!!!!)

Introduction, Saved in Hope

Hope is “trustworthy” because it is given to us by God.

The first line should give us pause as do the others.

Pope Benedict wants us to reflect on this by asking questions which he will later answer: What does that mean that “redemption based on hope?”; what is the Goal that he is talking about?

The Pope ends his introduction with a very intriguing question, “What sort of hope...”

Faith is Hope

- ▶ “Hope is equivalent to faith.”
 - ▶ Faith and hope are used interchangeably in the Bible
- ▶ A distinguishing mark of Christians is the fact that they have a future: their life will not end in emptiness.
- ▶ The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted a new life.
- ▶ To come to know God-the true God-means to receive hope.

Faith-based Hope in Scripture

- ▶ Jesus: the true shepherd who knows the path that passes through the valley of death; one who walks with me even on the path of final solitude, where no one can accompany me, guiding me through: he himself has walked this path...
- ▶ This is the new “hope” that arose over the lives of believers that were willing to give their life in witness to it



Hope is Israel's persevering faithfulness to God on the basis of the certainty of the Covenant in a world which contradicts God.
Benedict gives other examples of faith-based hope as described in the Bible.

Loss of Hope in the Modern Age

- ▶ Emergence of the 'kingdom of man', the new hope for the perfect human community
 - ▶ Science and praxis (technology)
 - ▶ Faith relegated to private matter – irrelevant for the world
 - ▶ Progress associated with reason and freedom - in conflict with faith
- ▶ Reason needs faith



Francis Bacon 1561-1626

Historical Context of Progress:

The modern age, beginning with figures like Francis Bacon, shifted hope from faith in God to faith in human progress through science and technology. Progress was seen as a way to regain dominion over creation, lost through original sin.

This vision of progress promised a "kingdom of man," where science and praxis would create a better world.

French Revolution

- ▶ Attempt to establish the rule of reason and freedom as a political reality
- ▶ Replacing ecclesiastical faith with pure religious faith or rational faith
- ▶ Faith in progress and human reason replaced faith in God

The French Revolution and the Kingdom of Reason:

The French Revolution was an attempt to establish the rule of reason and freedom as a political reality. It sought to create a new world order based on rationality and liberty, replacing ecclesiastical faith with pure religious faith or rational faith.

Initially, the Enlightenment viewed the revolution with fascination, seeing it as a pathway to the "Kingdom of God" on earth, where reason and freedom would reign.

Disillusionment with the Revolution:

As the revolution unfolded, its violent and chaotic nature led to a reevaluation of reason and freedom. The revolution's failure to deliver on its promises highlighted the limitations of human efforts to create a perfect world.

Immanuel Kant, who initially supported the revolution, later expressed concerns about its potential to lead to a "perverse end" of all things, especially if Christianity ceased to be a source of love and moral guidance.

(AI Assistant)

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The Crisis of Hope:

The French Revolution exemplified the modern crisis of hope, where faith in progress and human reason replaced faith in God. This shift led to the belief that humanity could establish justice and create a better world without divine intervention.

However, this hope in human efforts proved to be flawed. The revolution's failure demonstrated that human freedom is fragile and that structures alone cannot guarantee goodness or justice.

Lessons from the Crisis:

Pope Benedict XVI argues that the crisis of hope stemming from the French Revolution reveals the need for a self-critique of modernity. Progress and reason must be guided by faith and ethical principles to avoid destructive outcomes.

He emphasizes that true hope lies in God, not in human attempts to create a utopia. Only God can establish justice and provide the ultimate foundation for hope. (AI Assistant)

Is Our Hope Individualistic?

- ▶ In the modern age, the Church is seen as irrelevant or interfering with progress; superseded by rational faith which morphed into a private faith
- ▶ Salvation has always been considered a “social” reality.
- ▶ Sin is understood by the Fathers as the destruction of the unity of the human race, as fragmentation and division.

Marxism and the Russian Revolution

- ▶ Marxism's fundamental error was materialism:
 - ▶ it reduced human beings to products of economic conditions and assumed that fixing external structures would automatically redeem humanity
- ▶ Marxism ignored the need for ongoing moral and spiritual development

Misplaced Hope in Economic Structures:

Marxism believed that by overthrowing the ruling class, abolishing political power, and socializing the means of production, a perfect world—the "new Jerusalem"—would emerge.

Pope Benedict argues that Marxism's fundamental error was materialism: it reduced human beings to products of economic conditions and assumed that fixing external structures would automatically redeem humanity.

Neglect of Human Freedom:

Marxism overlooked the fact that human freedom is always fragile and capable of choosing evil. It failed to account for the complexity of human nature and the need for moral growth.

The Pope emphasizes that freedom cannot be denied or overridden by structures, as this would lead to a world that is not truly good.

Failure to Address Post-Revolution Realities:

Marxism provided a detailed critique of the existing order and a roadmap for revolution but offered no clear guidance on how to organize society afterward.

Lenin, after the revolution, realized that Marx's writings did not address how to proceed, leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat—a phase that caused immense destruction rather than ushering in a perfect world. (AI Assistant)

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The Illusion of Automatic Progress:

Marxism presumed that once economic conditions were corrected, human relationships and society would naturally sort themselves out. This assumption ignored the need for ongoing moral and spiritual development.

The Reality of Marxist Revolutions:

The Pope highlights the devastating consequences of Marxist revolutions, particularly in Russia, where the promised utopia led instead to widespread suffering, oppression, and destruction.

Materialism and the Denial of God:

Marxism rejected the idea of God and the hope of eternal life, focusing solely on earthly justice. This led to a world without hope, as it could not address the deeper questions of human existence or provide answers to centuries of suffering.

The Need for Redemption Beyond Structures:

Pope Benedict argues that humans cannot be redeemed solely through external changes like economic reforms. True redemption comes from love—specifically, the unconditional love of God, which transforms individuals from within. (AI Assistant)

Recovering Hope

- ▶ Christians must learn anew in what their hope truly consists, what they have to offer to the world and what they cannot offer
 - ▶ Self-critique of the modern age
 - ▶ Self-critique of modern Christianity
- ▶ If technical progress is not matched by corresponding progress in man's ethical formation, in man's inner growth, then it is not progress at all, but a threat for man and the world

Critique of Progress as Ultimate Hope:

The encyclical highlights the dangers of relying solely on progress for salvation. While progress has led to remarkable achievements, it has also opened the door to destructive forces, such as the development of weapons like the atom bomb. Progress must be accompanied by moral growth and guided by faith to avoid becoming a source of harm.

Progress in the material sphere does not guarantee moral or ethical progress. Human freedom and moral decision-making remain fragile and must be renewed in every generation. (AI Assistant)

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Ambiguity of Progress:

Progress offers new possibilities for good but also for evil. Without ethical growth and guidance, progress can become a threat to humanity and the world.

The document emphasizes that progress alone cannot redeem humanity. Redemption comes from love and faith in God, not from human achievements.

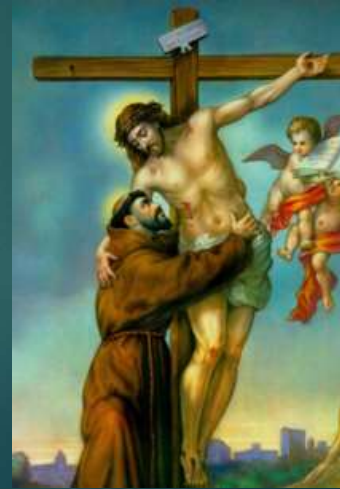
The False Promise of Utopian Ideals:

Ideologies like Marxism, which sought to create a perfect world through political and economic revolution, are critiqued. These movements underestimated human freedom and the persistence of evil, leading to destructive outcomes.

The belief that structural changes alone can guarantee a better world is rejected. True hope must account for human freedom and the need for inner transformation. (AI Assistant)

Man is Redeemed by Love

- ▶ Loving God leads to:
 - ▶ participation in the justice and generosity of God
 - ▶ interior freedom from all possessions and all material goods
 - ▶ responsibility for others



Progress and reason must be guided by faith and ethical principles to avoid destructive outcomes as witnessed in the French Revolution. Benedict emphasizes that true hope lies in God, not in human attempts to create a utopia. Only God can establish justice and provide the ultimate foundation for hope.

And Marxism and the failure of the Russian Revolution underscores the need for hope rooted in God, rather than in purely material or political solutions

Recap

- ▶ Contemporary man has developed a hope of creating a perfect world through progress, based on
 - ▶ scientific knowledge, the rule of reason and freedom and political structures, all “unshackled from religious interference”,
- ▶ Biblical hope in the Kingdom of God is displaced
- ▶ Christian hope becomes individualistic

see page 53

The “proof” of modern age conjecture that science and reason will create a perfect world is “progress”, but progress to what purpose and what end?

Recap

- ▶ Man needs the many greater or lesser hopes, but it is not enough...
- ▶ Man needs THE great hope which surpasses everything else, an infinite hope
- ▶ Kingdom of God is present wherever God is loved and wherever His love reaches us

The “proof” of the modern age conjecture that science and reason will create a perfect world is “progress”, but progress to what purpose and what end?

hope individualistic: see page 30 bottom of page.

Learning and Practicing Hope

- ▶ Schools of Hope
 - ▶ Prayer
 - ▶ Action and Suffering
 - ▶ Judgement



Prayer

- ▶ To develop purification, prayer must be something very personal, an encounter between my intimate self and God and also open to our fellow human beings
- ▶ Prayer is also enlightened by the great prayers of the Church
- ▶ Prayer as an exercise of desire (Augustine)
 - ▶ Man was created for greatness-to be filled by God
 - ▶ His heart is too small – it must be stretched
 - ▶ By delaying his gift, God strengthens our desire
 - ▶ Through desire he enlarges and increases our capacity for receiving him.

Why is prayer a school for hope: Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, a prisoner for 13 years in China. Intense and intimate prayer strengthened his hope.

Action and Suffering

- ▶ Christ descended into “Hell” and is therefore close to those cast into it, hence, suffering – without ceasing to be suffering – a hymn of praise
- ▶ The true measure of humanity is essentially determined in relationship to suffering and the sufferer...
 - ▶ to suffer with the other and for others;
 - ▶ to suffer for the sake of truth and justice;
 - ▶ to suffer out of love and in order to become a person who truly loves – these are fundamental elements of humanity, and to abandon them would destroy man himself

Pope Benedict closes this section with the recommendation to revive the practice of “offering up” our suffering and annoyances into Christ’s great “com-*passion*” so that they somehow become part of the treasury of compassion so greatly needed by the human race. p.47

Judgment

- ▶ A world which has to create its own justice is a world without hope
- ▶ God now reveals his true face in the figure of the Sufferer who shares man's God-forsaken condition by taking it upon himself...God can create justice in a way that we cannot conceive, yet we can begin to grasp it through faith.
- ▶ The judgement of God is hope, both because it is justice and because it is grace
- ▶ Our hope is always essentially also hope for others; only thus is it truly hope for me too.

Because of the suffering and the injustice witnessed in the world, the unbeliever feels that God has abandoned us and that man must create his own justice.

Justice and grace: justice, work out our salvation "with fear and trembling", and grace allows us to hope and go trustfully to meet the Judge whom we know is our "advocate".

Purgatory is hope (state involves purification and healing which mature the soul for communion with God).

Mary, Star of the Sea

- ▶ Life is like a journey on the sea of history:
 - ▶ we watch for stars to indicate the route
- ▶ Jesus, the true light
- ▶ We also needs lights close by – people who shine with his light: Mary



Stella Maris

Mary, Star of the Sea

*Holy, Mary, Mother of God, teach us to believe, to hope, to love with you.
Show us the way to his Kingdom!
Star of the Sea, shine upon us and guide us on our way!*



Stella Maris