

Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart



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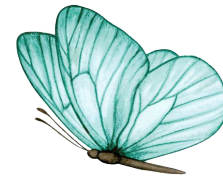
Happy New Year to each of you! As you will remember from an earlier email, we offered you, our readers, three possible questions to include in your prayer and reflection as 2023 drew to a close and 2024 began:

What are you hopeful for in the new year?

How might you nurture hope in yourself and others?

How/where do you find invitations to hope in your daily life?

St. Angela was a woman of hope, and her words continue to encourage and support our efforts to “have hope and firm faith in God who will help us everything” (Prologue to the Counsels). How much Angela’s spirit of hope is reflected in the following reflections from seven of our readers!

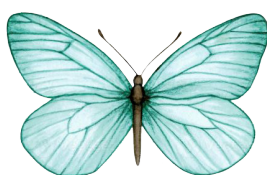


As 2024 becomes a reality I find myself hopeful for peace – peace within myself, peace with others. I am hopeful that we will end all wars and learn peace among one another. I am hopeful that we can learn to work together instead of being warring parties. I am hopeful that we can work with our refugees and migrants and truly be a democracy. I am hopeful as a woman religious that we can be positive in our thoughts, our words, and our actions. As we deal with being smaller communities, let us as St. Angela in her writings says to us, “live in harmony and love one another.”

—Mary Matthias Ward, OSU
Maple Mount, KY

A way I can nurture hope is by being more of a listening presence to hear people’s stories and then trying to acknowledge their pain and reaffirm the goodness in them. So many I know are being asked to make changes within their lives and I need to help them see that, no matter what, God is present. As I write this response, it is Epiphany Sunday, and I am struck by how the magi had to go home another way. What is the other way that I might be? How can I be creative when faced with challenges? How can I exist in the grey and uncertainty? I need to remember and remind others that no one is exempt from the human condition and experience of pain and disappointment, but how we deal, live life and treat others is what matters. I always think of hope as “Hold Onto Positive Energy” and “Hang On PeaCe Emerges,” and these are messages I find myself thinking and praying with each day and sharing with others.

—Jeannie Humphries, OSU
Eastchester, NY



HOPE

I nurture HOPE by taking RISKS

To be lost in living the
PRESENT MOMENT

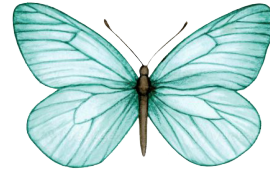
No expectations ~

ONLY to be surprised by my God.

Eyes open ~ WONDER ~ DREAM

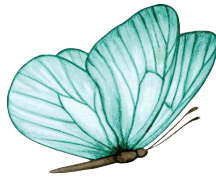
All will be well.

—Regina Marie Fronmüller, OSU
New Orleans, LA



As I complete a sabbatical, I hope to: 1) Communicate better with spiritual director and supervisors; 2) Live the plan, follow it; remember flow & flexibility are important; 3) Commit to tasks identified; 4) Be realistic with my goals, time, abilities; 5) Check in with advocates and friends...and return with a Christ-centered vision for the last quarter of life! Having a small Faith Community to hold your feet to the fire is also helpful! For over 27 years having a group of “4th Day” brothers and/or sisters from Cursillo, or other kinds of small faith communities, to ponder: study, piety, and action; a real plus to achieving realistic goals!

—Kevin Laughlin
Garden City, ID



My hope for the new year is that somehow our world “wakes up” to the many ways that we humans tear each other down. And that we focus on “building up” our world and one another. I love this hopeful quote from Desmond Tutu: *“Hope is being able to see that there IS light despite all of the darkness.”*

Here are some ways that I hope to say “yes” to nurturing hope:

- Take time to “press pause” when I need to regain the sense of hope within.
- List five things each day for which I am grateful.
- Choose “wisely” those avenues of the “news” I take in.
- Become more aware daily how I am drawn to negativity. Focus on the positive in each situation (because there IS some iota of positivity there!). I am drawn to use the following quote from St. Paul as part of my daily examen: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in God, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* (Romans 15:13)

Invitations to hope come to me through:

- Daily reflections based on Scripture, using a resource such as **Living Faith**.
- Listening and talking with friends, especially my weekly “Fourth Day” group, and sharing how God has been present in our lives.

—Margaret Johnson, OSU
Moscow, ID

A hope for the new year is a well-informed citizenry who will vote with both logic and compassion.

Nurturing hope in myself is a daily call to live with a peaceful heart when surrounded by uncertainty, to consciously choose and reflect on gratitude for abundant blessings, obvious or camouflaged. And, whether it's a day of "weeping over Jerusalem" or laughing out loud, keeping my gaze fixed on Jesus and recognizing Divine Presence. Nurturing hope in others is a call to quiet myself and LISTEN. Sometimes that is enough. Sometimes sharing some faltering steps from my own journey may be called for. Often, the "Other" may need material help to hold onto a fragile hope. Whichever need it is, I want to always see Jesus fixing his gaze on me from behind their eyes.

In my daily life, it seems that the "where" or the "how" of invitations to hope usually come from two places. The first "where" often involves someone in my daily life who is so filled with hope that I actually feel invited to place my feet on their footprints and walk. The second "where" in my daily life that invites me to hope is the greatest teacher of all – suffering. Whether this suffering is in the daily news, in my immediate circle, or in my own self, Angela's invitation to "bestir myself" calls me to respond, always aware of her reminder that "The One Who called will not desert & will stretch out a saving hand the moment we are in need."

—Barb Danner
Hillsboro, MO

Can We Hope?

Mom, is it all right to hope?
Yes, of course, it is all right to hope!
Why do you ask?

All the wars, people living in cars, and innocent people behind bars.

Hope does not change things right away. If we hope every day, God will lead the way.
The God we trust in prayer, is everywhere.

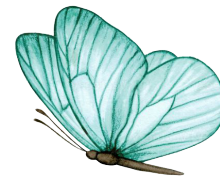
Our hope can never waver, it helps every neighbor.

All the wars, people living in cars, and innocent people behind bars
Will not stop without our hope.

You need to hope in order to change, my dear.
Each day we grow. We cannot live in fear.

Hope is our channel to peace.
There will be a day all wars, people living in cars, and innocent people behind bars will cease.

If only our hope, we keep.



—Mary McDermott, OSU
Maple Mount, KY

For Prayer and Pondering:

How do these reflections capture the signs of our times?

What do these reflections stir in you?

How do you feel invited to respond as you live into the new year?