

## Why is Hope so important?

Readings: *Psalm 71 1 Peter 1: 3-9 Luke 4: 16-21*



Orans figures with arms in praise,  
from a Coptic Egyptian Church in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century.

Art in the Christian Tradition.

A project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville.

### A reflection on the readings by Revd Becky

In some ways, hope is difficult to define,  
even though we know it is important for its  
opposite is despair.

It seems to me that hope is based on two premises:

1. experience / memory of the past
2. a re-imagination of the future that inspires positive action.

Stories of our faith are a gift to us. They ground us, as a Christian community, in the fact that God's promises are fulfilled. We can therefore trust and hope in the character of God who was with his/her people in the past and is with his/her people today.

The Psalmist looks back in the Bible to the mighty acts of God and these give him hope. He names the wonders and promises of God that have been fulfilled through scripture and experience.

When I look back over my life I find that God is always surprising - at a time when I was questioning the Church's understanding of inclusion John Sentamu was appointed as the Archbishop of York; at a time when I had little money due to illness I had a tax refund; at a time when I thought I would not find a life partner who would support me as a priest, I met Neil. A focus on the faithfulness of God in my past gives me hope for the future. My hope in God is not naïve hope- it is based on faith worked out in my life experience.

My hope in God is also based on the fact that Jesus suffered. God does not hide his/her face from suffering. Jesus named the suffering in the world and through his life reimagined what human relationships in the world could be like: A world in which good news *can* be brought to the poor- because he did so; A world in which captives *can* be released because he released them; A world in which the oppressed *can* go free because he enabled that to happen. Jesus life gives me hope that I too can show God's favour in our world today and that human relationships can be transformed.

### XIII *Usque quo, Domine?*

Come down to free us, come as our true  
friend,  
How long, how long? Oh do not hide your  
face  
Or let me sleep in death, but light my end,

Till it becomes a bright beginning. Place  
Your wounded hands in mine and raise me  
up  
That even grief itself may turn to grace.

Then I will sing a song of sudden hope,  
Then I will praise my saviour, the divine  
Companion who drank the bitter cup

And in so doing made it flow with wine,  
That his strong love might overrun my heart  
And all his joy in heaven might be mine.

Then I will sing his song, and take my part  
In Love's true music, as his kingdom comes  
And heaven's hidden gates are drawn apart.

*(This is a poem by Malcolm Guite based on a Psalm  
of Sudden Hope- Psalm 13).*

There are so many amazing stories of Jesus and the lives of the Saints that are hope filled. This week we have celebrated the life of St Mary Magdalene- a life completely transformed by Jesus. Many prayers have been answered as people have considered the life of St Jude, the patron saint of hopeless causes! St Hope of Rome was one of the three daughters of St Sophia who survived torture and is said to answer prayers today. She is usually depicted with the anchor of hope held in her right hand. Modern saints still inspire us, such as Jacqui Pullinger, who heard God's call to work in China and was enabled through the Holy Spirit to transform the lives of heroin addicts.

A final thought- Jesus suffered, died *and* rose again and this gives me hope for the future that nothing can separate me from the love of God.

I wonder as you look over your past where you can see God's care for you?  
I wonder which faith stories inspire you with hope as you look to the future?  
I wonder how you re-imagine the world and will act to fulfil that imagination?

### **HYMN REFLECTION**

Sometimes there is an "obvious" hymn to go with a given theme or text. This week there are two, *All my hope on God is founded* and *Spirit of the living God*. But it can be more interesting to look beyond the obvious and see what else there is. The two hymns mentioned are both about "me"; what about "love one another", St. Peter's words, so perfectly set in Wesley's famous anthem?

Wikipedia describes John Raphael Peacey, the author of this week's hymn, as a cricketer, a batsman for Sussex, but he was much more than that. He won the Military Cross in the First World War; was a teacher in India throughout the Second World War, and then became a Canon of Bristol Cathedral. He only wrote his eighteen hymns at the very end of his life, and they were published posthumously, five of them in *100 Hymns for Today* (1969), and three of those are now mainstream. When new hymns come along, give them a go; they could be good. The scriptural indexes in modern hymn books are a great help.

Another reason for choosing this hymn is the tune, an excellent tune by our own most famous local composer, Henry Lawes (1595 - 1662). *Farley Castle* fits several good 10 10 10 10 hymns and should be known by everybody. Henry and his brother William, also a composer, were born in Dinton. Henry's career was interrupted by politics, but he wrote an anthem for the Coronation of King Charles II, and he is buried in Westminster Abbey.

Filled with the Spirit's power, with one accord  
the infant Church confessed its risen Lord.  
O Holy Spirit, in the Church today  
no less your power of fellowship display.

Now with the mind of Christ set us on fire,  
that unity may be our great desire.  
Give joy and peace; give faith to hear your call,  
and readiness in each to work for all.

Widen our love, good Spirit, to embrace  
in your strong care the men of every race.  
Like wind and fire, with life among us move,  
till we are known as Christ's, and Christians prove.

MGS