

## **Women of the Church Study**

### **Month 12**

### **Week 1**

### **Dolores Hope**

“Dolores Hope was a Catholic of deep and abiding faith, and her own spiritual journey was her highest priority” (LA Archbishop Jose Gomez). Dolores was a lifelong Catholic. She lived to be 102 years old, passing away in 2011. She is remembered as an entertainer, the widow of comedian Bob Hope, and as the benefactor of many charitable causes. When she died it was said that “both the entertainment world and The Church had lost a woman of profound faith, gifted musical talent and dedication to the betterment of peoples worldwide” (Gomez).

Dolores was born Dolores DeFina in New York City in 1909 and grew up in the Bronx.

During the 1930s she pursued a professional singing career, performing in the New York nightclub circuit. She met Bob Hope when he was in New York; he had come to hear her sing. They had a brief courtship and married in 1934. Dolores left the night club circuit to join Bob in his vaudeville act and they toured major stages together.

Dolores then temporarily discontinued her professional career to take on the role of motherhood. She and Bob adopted four children. The family moved to Hollywood for Bob’s career. As Dolores raised the children, her husband’s career took off and he was often away from the home. Later, Dolores resumed her career, performing in her husband’s famed overseas tours to entertain the US troops and she also sang on many of his TV specials.

During a trip to Saudi Arabia to entertain troops in Operation Desert Storm, Dolores was the only female entertainer allowed to perform in that country. She resumed her own singing career, recording her first CD at age 83.

Dolores had a chapel in her home where she frequently asked friends to gather for retreat. She has a large collection of books on spiritual topics and encouraged her friends to read them. Dolores was close to many clergy, including priests, nuns, bishops and cardinals. “Her deep life in Christ was the springboard for her charitable giving to countless ministries, apostolates, and works of mercy across the country and around the world” (Gomez). Dolores prayed persistently for her husband; she was influential in his conversion to Catholicism later in his life at age 93.

Dolores Hope’s life was “an example of doing generous acts to elevate and improve the lives of others” (Bob and Dolores Hop Foundation). Dolores and Bob donated regularly to their diocese and church in Los Angeles and were benefactors of the Chapel of Our Lady of Hope at the Basilica of The National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. They donated to many other charities, particularly those who served youth, such as the Big Shoulders Fund for inner city Catholic schools. Even today, a grant built on the Bob Hope Military Emergency Assistance Fund is serving military families impacted by global COVID 19 pandemic.

Dolores was the recipient of numerous secular and religious awards and honors. She is one of four women in the world to have been presented the Dame of St, Gregory the Great with Star papal honor from Pope John Paul II.

## Resources:

[www.ncregister.com/site/print/30893](http://www.ncregister.com/site/print/30893)

[www.archbalt.org/dolores-hope-dies-at-age-102-was-supporter-of-numerous-catholic-causes](http://www.archbalt.org/dolores-hope-dies-at-age-102-was-supporter-of-numerous-catholic-causes)

[www.printfriendly.com/p/g/ywHM4H](http://www.printfriendly.com/p/g/ywHM4H)

[www.bobhope.org/bob-dolores-hope/dolores/](http://www.bobhope.org/bob-dolores-hope/dolores/)

## **Dolores Hope—Reflections**

--Dolores was known for her care for others and her generosity. “Her life in Christ was the springboard for her charitable giving to countless ministries, apostolates, and works of mercy across the country and around the world” (Gomez). Dolores Hope’s life was “an example of doing generous acts to elevate and improve the lives of others” (Bob and Dolores Hop Foundation). Dolores was quoted as saying “If you’re shivering in the cold, you can’t do a good job. We need to provide food, shelter and clothing. In that order.”

-How do I feel about the last quote above, in terms of prioritizing care for others?

-How does my faith lead me to be generous toward others?

--Even though well known in many other ways, Dolores was remembered for her deep faith. Her faith life appeared to have a predominant place in her life and was not something she kept quiet. Dolores had a chapel in her home where she frequently asked friends to gather for retreat. She has a large collection of books on spiritual topics and encouraged her friends to read them. Dolores was close to many clergy, including priests, nuns, bishops and cardinals.

-What kind of things in my daily life reflect my faith? How do I share these with others?

-What other things can I do to outwardly represent my faith?

--Dolores died in the month of September (at age 102). When visited by her parish priest late in the summer when she was still “quite conscious”, he said to her “Dolores, I hope you are living comfortably”. She responded with a quip “I’m ready to get out of here comfortably.”

<https://www.ncregister.com/site/print/30893>

-What do I think of Dolores’ apparent attitude toward her life and impending death?

-How does this reflect her life and her faith?

-How does this fit (or not) with my attitude toward death?

--Although we could consider her famous and wealthy, Dolores’ life certainly appeared to have had some challenges. Dolores and Bob both likely coped with the stressors of the “show business” lifestyle. Dolores seems to have been responsible for the four children, when her even more famous husband out of the home or on tour, not to mention his reported infidelity. Yet Dolores seemed to have had a great deal of fortitude and persistence and a solid sense of her own identity, especially within the faith. She accomplished many things in the secular world, including recording a CD at age 83. Even more importantly she was honored for her charitable and philanthropic work and was instrumental in her husband’s conversion to Catholicism.

-How do I think Dolores was able to accomplish so much in her life time, both in the secular world and in her religious/faith life, despite some apparent challenges and adversity?

-How does this speak to me in terms of my life? Does it provide me with encouragement?

## Devotions/Prayers

--Dolores prayed fervently over a long period of time for her husband, Bob Hope, who eventually came to the faith in his older years. We may want to pray for conversion for someone we know.

“All of us know someone in our lives, whether a friend or family member, who is trying to stay far from God. As much as we wish to influence them through our words or actions, they persist in shutting God out. Our last resort (which should also be our first resort) is to pray for that individual, asking God to shower down his graces upon him or her. One way to do that is to pray the following prayer revealed to St. Faustina by Jesus Christ himself. She experienced many mystical visions of Jesus and in one of them, he suggests the following”:

*Today Jesus said to me, “I desire that you know more profoundly the love that burns in My Heart for souls, and you will understand this when you meditate upon My Passion. Call upon My mercy on behalf of sinners; I desire their salvation. When you say this prayer, with a contrite heart and with faith on behalf of some sinner, I will give him the grace of conversion. This is the prayer: O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of Mercy for us, I trust in You.”*

<https://aleteia.org/2019/02/17/jesus-himself-gave-us-this-prayer-for-the-conversion-of-a-friend-or-family-member/> Philip Kosloski | Feb 17, 2019

--Dolores had challenges in her life, as we all do. Yet she persisted in her faith walk and prayer life. Let us do the same, keeping a prayer like this in mind...

Lord, I'm weary. My energy is sagging, and my motivation is lagging. And I am so in need of you. I need your strength and your fresh touch to get back on track again. Your Word says the joy of the Lord is my strength. If that's true, then I need your joy to replace all the bone-tired parts of my mind, body, and soul.

The pressures of life sometimes push me into a corner, rendering me helpless to move forward. A hundred voices call my name, and I feel paralyzed at times to answer, not knowing where to turn. Lord, help me not to quit, to keep running the race faithfully, and to find strength in that safe, secret place of yours, under the shadow of the Almighty.

I need your strength to say no when I'm tempted to surrender to harmful things, or when selfishness clings to my clothes and won't let go. I need your strength to say yes, when cowardice and fear nudge me to deny the convictions of my heart. I need your strength to reach out in love to those both close to me and all around me. When don't I need your strength, God?

You are my rock, and I run to you today, believing that you will lift up my heavy arms, that you will fuel me for the tasks you've given me, and that your joy will completely consume the weakness of my life and make me strong again. I don't want to stay grounded, crippled by limitations and failed attempts. I'm tired of feeble efforts. Lord, I want to mount up with wings like an eagle and not just fly. I want to soar.

Renew my strength, Lord. Fill me with your supernatural power to overcome each obstacle in my path. With my eyes on you, Lord, with you walking beside me, working through me, I can make it. Thank you, Lord! In Jesus's name, Amen

~ Rebecca Barlow Jordan <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/prayer/a-prayer-for-strength.html>

## Practical Applications

Dolores' faith had a prominent place in her life, both spiritually/inwardly and physically/outwardly as demonstrated in facets of her life such as her giving spirit, her home chapel, and her relationships with others. Think of some ways you might enhance the place of faith in your life and try to implement these. Here are a few ideas...

-Identify a "cause" you feel interested in and committed to. Decide how you can give and be generous to this cause—maybe through prayer, time, material donations, financial support or sharing with others. Start with something small and see how it develops.

-Develop a "devotional" space in your home—a place you might go to for prayer, a place where you keep your Bible and devotional readings, a place where you might journal.

Consider adding physical symbols to this space—a candle, cross, etc. Spend time in this space on a regular basis. (\*There are a number of on-line resources related to setting up a home prayer space/chapel/altar

-Make it a point to incorporate faith and spirituality into interactions you have with others. Look for opportunities to share your faith with others—maybe some time to listen to another's faith journey, maybe a time to share your own. Follow up with these interactions in your relationships.

"Bob Hope would say of his wife, Dolores, a lifelong Catholic and daily communicant, "My wife, Dolores, does enough praying to take care of both of us." However, eventually Dolores' prayers were answered, and Bob was baptized into the church...

Father Groeschel said, "Dolores. . . faithfully, prayerfully, patiently, and with a certain amount of suffering" endured these trials. Father Groeschel said the reason she was able to persevere was that "Dolores Hope was a great Christian," and, through it all, she was praying for him...

Cardinal Theodore McCarrick observed, 'Basically, the agent of his conversion was his wife.' She was a daily communicant and prayed for him with a deep faith, asking others to pray for him as well. Longtime friend Virginia Zamboni said, 'She took very good care of him.'...

Largely due to the prayers and devotion of his wife, Bob Hope died with eternal hope."

(<https://www.movieguide.org/news-articles/stories-of-faith-bob-hope-finds-real-hope-in-jesus.html>)

-Think about who you may be praying for, or who it would be good for you to pray for, especially for that person's faith. Reflect on Dolores Hope's convictions, perseverance and fortitude in prayer. See if you can apply some of this to your own prayers for the person for whom you are praying. Pray boldly and with trust and never give up!!