

The Light of Hope

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

January 26, 2020

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Chances are most of you are frustrated by the political situation in our country right now. I can say that freely because there seems to be an equal amount of frustration on both the left and the right. For very different reasons, the vast majority of Americans are in the same boat for once: angry, disturbed, mistrustful of others, and thinking the worst. Whatever your politics is and wherever you fall on the issues, I'm guessing you think the future isn't looking good. In a certain sense, its not!

But I would hope that our Catholic faith is more important to us than our political parties. I would hope that Jesus Christ is more important to us than any politician. This is not an attempt to avoid the issues of today or to dismiss their complexity, but it is an attempt to see if our faith is the most important aspect of our lives, or if our political allegiance is more important to us. As people of faith, at the end of the day, our faith has to be stronger. Our faith has to give us hope in the future.

Pope St. John XXIII, the pope who called for Vatican II to update the Church and its practices, reminded the bishops in his opening speech on October 11, 1962 of the necessity of being a voice of hope for the future. This was a challenge to a whole mindset in the church. At that time, many in the church, including its bishops, were extremely pessimistic. Coming off of two world wars, new innovations that seemed to replace God in modern life, and the move towards religious freedom for all, made them very nervous. For them, the church was to be like a castle for Catholics to huddle in to find safety and escape from the world. If there was any

opening to the world, it was to go back in time to a world where things seemed to go in the Catholic Church's favor.

In that important speech, Pope John challenged that mindset. As a believer, he was convinced that God is still at work in the present moment and is trying to create a future for God's people. Pope John therefore said, "we must reject the prophets of doom, who are always forecasting disaster, as if the end of the world were at hand." Vatican II was to be an encouraging council that could acknowledge problems, but with a positive spirit.

Pope John sounded a lot like the Prophet Isaiah in our first reading today. As we heard, Isaiah said, "anguish has taken wing, dispelled is the is darkness: for there is no gloom where but now there was distress. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone." Yes, there is darkness, but there is also light. He further qualified it as a 'great' light. This light is powerful enough to overcome distress and gloom.

Even in difficult moments where it is easy to be frustrated, the light of faith enables us to still be hopeful.

Have I let current events take away my positive outlook?

For as bad as we might see our present world, whether in the church or society, this is certainly not the worst period in history. And even if it was the darkest moment in history, the light of God would still shine brighter: "anguish has taken wing, dispelled is the is darkness: for there is no gloom where but now there was distress. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone."