



WE NEED HOPE

by Bro FRANCESCO DILEO OFMCap

The newly begun 2024 has awakened in us a stronger desire for happiness, or at least serenity, than the last few years. Last January, we longed for the end of the pandemic nightmare. However, over the past 12 months, while the impact of Covid has decreased, it has not entirely eliminated the risk of lethality, especially for the most vulnerable. We hoped that, in 2023, the efforts of international diplomatic resolutions would bring an end to the conflict in Ukraine. Instead, death, suffering and terror continue to disrupt the lives of an increasingly exhausted population, while another bloody war has erupted in what most of humanity considers the Holy Land. We were waiting for an economic relief but we only got some signs of recovery, barely perceptible and just impacting the spending capacity of ordinary families.

As we face a new year, our expectations, intact and increased, confront us with two conflicting feelings: disappointment, risking transformation into discouragement,

and hope.

Hope is, certainly, a Christian virtue, but it is also a primary human need. Karl Menninger, considered one of the most influential post-World War II American psychiatrists, was the first to emphasize its importance in motivational drive and called it a «positive expectation,» having observed its primary role in the success of his patients' therapeutic journey.

Therefore, we need, hope. Believing that the future will be better than the present. Yet, we must not rely solely on the Above and on others. The famous phrase «homo faber fortunae suae,» attributed to the pre-Christian Roman writer Appius Claudius Cieco and popularized by Renaissance thinkers, though not taken literally, can be a stimulus to understand our individual responsibilities.

No one is exempt from contributing to the Kingdom of God, even on this earth. This is not a task exclusive to ordained ministers, as emphasized by St. Pio of Pietrelcina, in a letter written 110 years ago to one of his spiritual daughters, the noblewoman from Foggia, Raffaolina Cerase: «All of us are not

called by God to save souls and propagate His glory by the noble apostolate of preaching. Remember, moreover, that this is not the only means of achieving these two great ideals. One can promote God's glory and work for the salvation of souls by means of a truly Christian life, by praying without ceasing that "His kingdom come," that His name "be hallowed," that "we may not be led into temptation" and that He "deliver us from evil."« (Epist. II, p. 70). All people of goodwill, even the humblest and social outcasts have two extremely powerful «weapons» to destroy hatred and the dominance of lust; the culture of love, a prerequisite for peace can flourish on the ruins of these vices. These two «weapons» are example and prayer. Make good use of them and we will be able to make our small, but very important, contribution to preparing a better future and, in the process, we will also obtain an immediate result: the serenity that springs from hope.

Happy New Year!



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