



# April Reflection

Hope in the Risen Lord – “You have believed because you have seen me.

Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.” – John 20:29

If you are a football fan you will have heard many times the phrase ‘it is the hope that kills you’. You can get by with losing week in week out, you can bear that. It is however the moment when things start looking up, the ‘lucky’ results fall your way and then the impossible feels possible – surviving relegation, being promoted, maybe even winning a trophy; and then out of the jaws of victory your club grabs defeat. That crushing feeling of loss, you could see the glory before you, you could feel it, taste it and then it’s gone. You think it was better not even knowing there was glory then to have it robbed. ‘It’s the hope that kills you’.

This view of hope is probably how most people understand the word. The fingers crossed, last gasp chance, will you be lucky? You probably won’t be but you can always hope! This is not what Christian hope is about. To ease any confusion, I will call the hope we started this reflection with: secular hope. Secular hope is a wisp, a house built on sand that with the slightest nudge it all falls apart. That is not Christian hope. Secular hope is a dream, an ideal, not a reality to be known. A belief without proof, a last resort, powerless wishing. This is not Christian hope.

Christian hope is faith filled trust. It is not a wish for something, it is the assured knowledge that Jesus keeps his promises. It may be out of our control, but it is in His. The scripture we are called to reflect on this month is John 20:29, this is when St Thomas meets the Risen Lord a week after Easter Sunday, Jesus gives Thomas the proof he desired to believe and then states: ‘You have believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.’ This is us. St John really highlights in his Gospel Jesus’ desire that we may know Him and believe in Him just as the apostles did. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prays for us at the same time He prays for the 11 with Him: “I do not pray for these only, but also those who believe in me through their word” (John 17:20). We are not first hand witnesses of the Risen Jesus, we haven’t touched His hands and feet. Yet we believe. We trust in the faith and witness of the Church across millennia. We trust in His word. Secular hope is a house built on sand, built on a weak foundation. Christian Hope is built on Christ, He is the foundation; with the Apostles as the pillars; Scripture and Tradition as the walls; and the witness of our community and the saints as the roof! Christian hope is a communal action it draws us into the family of God and as one people we look toward the ultimate fulfilment of God’s promises, while basking in those promises already fulfilled.

Christian hope, lived in the Church, sustains us. Secular hope was found to be more crushing than hopelessness! Secular hope can only bloom in good times. Speaking as a Derby County fan I did not have much hope when we broke premier league records for the lowest points. Christian hope blossoms in the most difficult of times, it is the anchor in the storm. When all around seems lost, Christian hope tells us the battle is already won, that this too shall pass. It was this hope in the Risen Lord that prompted St Paul to acclaim: ‘in all things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ (Romans 8:37-39). Our hope is that we will never be abandoned or rejected by God, He is always with us. Our hope is in the Lord, the one who has created the world, the one who has saved the world and conquered the greatest power in the world, death. We do not have to rely on our own strength but on the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. As the catechism states we are called to be buoyed up by hope so that it changes our lives and leads us to bring love, peace and joy into the world. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1817-1821).

*How are you going to bring the hope of Easter into the world?*

*Where can the light of hope dispel the darkness of fear and sadness in your community?*

*Do you find it hard to trust that God cares about your life?*

Remember Jesus was speaking about you, you are blessed. Trust in Him. Hope doesn’t kill you, it sustains and strengthens you until you no longer need it as you behold Him face to face.

Lord Jesus,

You are the source of my hope and strength,  
be with me in my time of need,  
help me not to lose sight of you,  
and give me the courage to trust in your promises.

I know you are all good,

I know that you love me,

I know that you have pardoned all my sins,

and I know that you have conquered death and offer me eternal life.

Jesus I trust in you.

Jesus I place all my hope in you alone.

Jesus I love you.

Help me be a witness to Christian hope.

Amen.

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