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Celebration of Hope

St. Mary's Church

Oswego, New York

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The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that, “**Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus’ preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes. The *beatitudes* raise our hopes towards heaven as the new Promised Land.**”

The Catechism also tells us that:

Hope is the “sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. Did you hear that? Sure and steadfast anchor. **WOW!**

Hope, it also says, is that which protects us in the struggle of salvation.

And finally the Catechism teaches that hope is expressed and nourished in **prayer**.

Let’s look, first, at the Apostles after the death of Jesus. They were despondent. They were afraid and dejected. They hid. These were the very ones chosen by Jesus himself. They had walked with Jesus for three years. Jesus had preached to them and taught them. Yet this is how they reacted!

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, reminded us tonight, “**The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness.**”

So, the Apostles, in their human weaknesses, struggled with the reality of the death of Jesus and experienced most of the human limitations that accompany the death of a loved one: fear, loneliness, dejection, grief, to name a few. However, the Acts of the Apostles tells us the Apostles were together in the Upper Room when the Spirit came upon them, and they were renewed and transformed. We know the rest of the story. These same Apostles continued the mission of Jesus in such a dynamic manner that it lives on to this day.

How often have we heard the witness of grassroots people like you and me? Right now throughout our country there are people who have lost **everything** through fires, through floods, or because of the present economic crisis. Yet we hear over and over, “We are alive. That is all that is important. We can begin again; we are alive!”

Presently, many of our sisters and brothers are hurting deeply at this time because their parish has closed, or is linked, or merged, with another parish. This is similar to a death of a loved one. These people need time to grieve, to let go and accept the present reality.

Yes, in all of these crises, there will be tears and pain. Yes, we do hurt, not only for ourselves, but also for others. Yet as our president has often said, “We must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and begin again.”

Why? Because we are an Easter People! For some reason, at times the memory and pain of Good Friday seems an easier reality to grasp. We are more readily able to name and claim suffering. But, we are a people called to Hope, a people called to believe in, and work for transformation, liberation and resurrection.

Paul ended the reading from Romans proclaimed this evening with one of the most eloquent statements in all Christian spiritual writing:

“I am convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in the heights or depths – nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!

In other words, if God is for us, who is against us?