IMPRINT

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hope

On May 3rd, 2025,

hundreds of people flooded St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan to celebrate the life of a man whose hope shaped the understanding of the human person across the United States — John Cardinal O'Connor, Philadelphia row-house boy turned Navy chaplain turned Archbishop of New York. His myriad life experiences — from living in muddy trenches with Marines in Vietnam, to working with Naval officers and sailors, to ministering to those with disabilities, to changing the bedpans of AIDS patients, to listening to the hearts of New Yorkers, to founding the Sisters of Life — convicted him of one essential truth: the goodness of human life. He was moved by the human person and by the capacity of every soul, and he saw in each a reflection of the glory of Almighty God. Every human person was, to him, a tangible sign of God's personal love in the world. And it fired his hope.

Hope is founded on the certainty of God's loving presence, higher and deeper than our circumstances. It roots us in the truth that we're not a team of one; the world is not solely on our shoulders. We can't fabricate hope ourselves; it is not the result of worldly progress nor is it the result of worldly progress nor is it the eradication of suffering.

Hope is the "theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit" *(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1817).* Cardinal O'Connor knew that hope is simultaneously based in the future and lived now: we have reason to believe that God will continue to be with us.

Hope propels us forward. We are made for endless life with God which, rather than an endless succession of days, is the fullness of life, where we are plunged "ever anew in the vastness of being, in which we are simply overwhelmed with joy" (*Spe Salvi, 12*).

Like Cardinal O'Connor, we can have hope that we, into whose hearts God has "put eternity" (*Ecc 3:11*), will be given what we need to respond to this desire for eternal happiness. We can let this hope change how we live now, rooting us in the truth of our goodness and Jesus' love for us. May the trustworthiness of our God who keeps His promises anchor us in this life, giving us hope each day as we persevere in running the race set before us (*cf. Heb 12:1-2*).

Know of our prayers for you and your loved ones.

In Christ, Our Life, and Mary, Our Mother,

Mother Mary Concepta, SV

Mother Mary Concepta, SV

"We have reason for hope.
Look at you.
Look at you.
There is our hope.
Look at the wonder of you."

-John Cardinal O'Connor

HOPE IS THE CAPACITY TO LIVE IN REALITY

By Sr. Mary Grace, SV

"I am definitively loved, and whatever happens to me — I am awaited by this love. And so my life is good." - St. Josephine Bakhita

We don't need to look far for hope; it's found in the God-given goodness that defines your life. God doesn't second-guess your sacredness or reverse His plan for your eternal joy. Regardless of whether you have been disengaged, disconnected, devoted, or despairing, He does not cease blessing you, like the Prodigal Father who never tired of blessing his son (*cf. Lk 15:11-32*). Hope is the capacity to live this reality — the reality of His eternal plan of love for you — which He couldn't wait till heaven to hand to you.

Hope is the secure foundation where we stand confident in what the Savior says. And what He says stabilizes your life in every circumstance, because nothing is too little nor too grand for His love. We have hope because our belovedness precedes our existence, and we have hope because that remains unchangeably consistent. Your worth isn't earned; it's the gift God is giving you now. You are good — and not only good, but sacred. You matter and have meaning, even when you can't see it.

Hope isn't idealism, positive thinking, or the result of willpower. Hope is holding on to the clarity of reality, even when reality, at times, can seem the furthest truth from us. Hope puts God back in the driver's seat of our life. There is no hell too hard for Christ to conquer. He has accomplished every comeback — and that includes your story. Often, we're hardened because we're hurting, or we're afraid to live more boldly because we're broken.

But hope lets go of self-protection and self-reliance by letting oneself be real, opened and loved by Him. Hope isn't about holding out until things improve or change. "Hardness of heart" is the one condition God cautions us against every day in the morning prayer of the Church — "harden not your hearts" (*Ps 95:8*).

Hope highlights what we long for and what we lack — and holds on to the Hands that give us the answers we ache for. It's not our responsibility to determine His response, but to ask, seek, and hold on to Him.

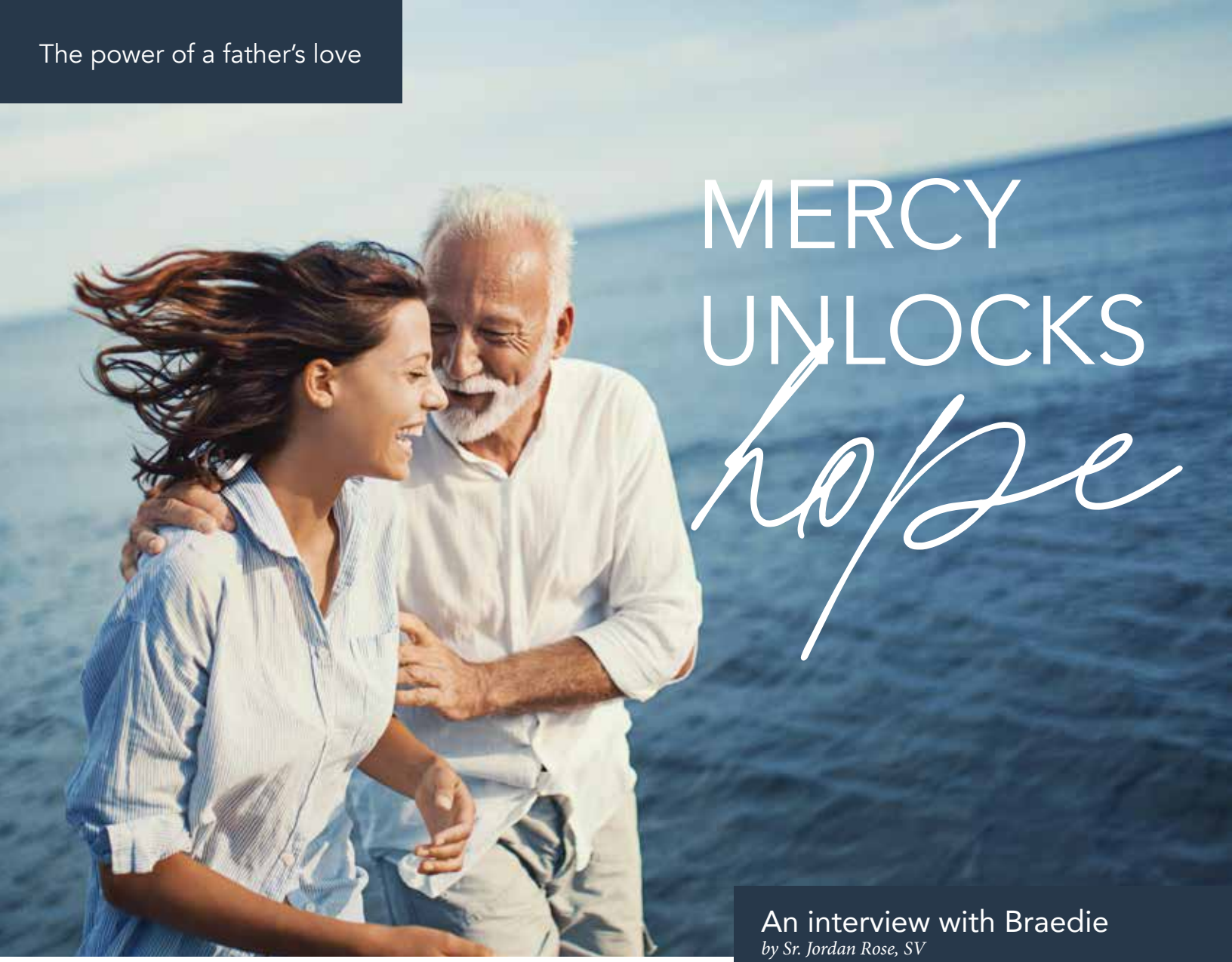
A hoping heart is a waiting heart. Hope perdures in the hidden places. Holiness isn't having it all together — it's your need responding to His promptings to love you and lead you, precisely in the place you're in.

If you are experiencing confusion, let that be the cause to come to Christ and seek His truth. Going through doubt, discouragement, fear, loneliness, or self-loathing? Let it be the line that leads you to the Lord to settle your storm. Don't let your doubt dampen your praise. A hoping heart is a praising heart.

Deeper than every lie is a liberating truth God will let loose in you. He who is in you is ministering to you at every moment. Let us not conditionalize the unconditional love of God.

My word for you is this: Do not fear the revival of your heart — for death and darkness are not the depth of you — but there, in the core of your heart, resides the supernatural seed of a spiritual revival: your inherent, undeniable, unshakable, unerasable goodness, your God-given capacity to love and love again, because you are the bearers of the life of God that beats in you — the only you there is.

Follow Him. He is your Hope.



MERCY UNLOCKS *hope*

An interview with Braedie

by Sr. Jordan Rose, SV

We met Braedie shortly after she discovered she was pregnant with her son, Danny, who is now the love of her life. She is an incredible mother with a powerful testimony to the hope born of mercy.

Can you tell us a bit about your story?

I was raised in an Irish Catholic family, where it was the mindset of: God first, then family, and then anything else. I went to a Catholic school, and I chose to keep practicing my faith in university. I feel like university is a time in life where a lot of people split off, because they think, "My parents made me go to Catholic school, but now I can start my own life. And if I don't want to go to Church, I don't have to." Faith was still important to me, so I decided to join the young adult ministry to be around other Christian people. I felt at home with this community. We spent time together, did service projects together, and when I would fall or make mistakes, I felt no judgement.

> When I told my dad, he gave me a big hug. From that moment, I felt nothing but support.

Fast forward a few years. Once I graduated and was no longer with my university friends, I thought, "I want a community again. What can I do?" So I started helping out at my local parish, but it just didn't feel the same. I didn't necessarily lose my faith, but feeling like I didn't have a community was really tough on me. I was still going to Church, still going through the motions, but I just felt lost, because I felt like I lost my community.

And then I met Brett. Brett's not Catholic, but he believes in Jesus and he's always been interested in the faith. About a year into our relationship, he proposed to me, and we were engaged. A few months later, I found out that I was pregnant. I really didn't know how people would respond, especially in my parish community. I thought I would be judged, or people would tell me, "You can't be part of this community anymore," because I wasn't married.

Before telling my parents or anyone else that I was pregnant, I felt like I needed to talk to someone. I called Stephanie, another young adult from the parish whom I had met only a few weeks before. I said, "I know we just met, but I just really need to talk to someone."

Little did I know, Stephanie had woken up that morning with a gut instinct of, "I feel like Braedie's going to call me today. I feel like there's something that I need to do, like, I have a mission today." She drove down to meet me, and that's when she said, "Have you ever heard of the Sisters of Life?" And I said, "No, I haven't." She says, "Well, I called them, and I thought maybe you'd want to talk to them."

I was hesitant at first. I felt like, "Oh, no, I hope they don't judge me or think poorly of me." Later, when Stephanie and I spoke with the Sisters, the last thing I felt was judged. In the end, I think we talked for three or four hours, and I felt completely at ease.

I remember my biggest fear was telling my parents. It wasn't that I thought my dad would disown me or yell at me, because my parents have never been like that. I think it was more just fear of disappointing them.

When I told my dad, he gave me a big hug. He had actually had a dream the night before of this scenario, and it was happening right in front of him. He said, "You know, I knew this was coming." From that moment, I felt supported.

That's a huge grace, that God had prepared people's hearts to receive you. What was it like for you when your dad embraced you?

Emotional. I knew when I was 10 years old that I wanted to name my son "Danny" after my dad, because I just looked up to him so much. I was scared that he would be disappointed in me, because of the way my parents raised me. To have him embrace me meant the world. The pregnancy actually ended up bringing me and my dad closer together. When I was 13 weeks along, he started to go up to people at the parish, saying, "I'm going to be a grandpa!" He was so proud. And my Church community showed me nothing but love and mercy. They even wanted to throw a baby shower for me! I think one of the huge lessons I learned from all of this is just how merciful not only God is, but also how merciful God's people are.

It sounds like receiving mercy gave you new hope when you needed it most?

Exactly. You can read all about the experiences of saints or different people who experience God's grace and mercy and hope, but when you experience it yourself, there's just no other answer but, "That was God." Stephanie, the Sisters, my dad's response, my community — there's just no other explanation, no other answer, but that it was God Who helped me, Who saved me. I feel like my role now, because of my experience, is to give hope to the next generation.

What's it like to be a mom?

I can't even put it into words. Even on the tough days, this is still my favorite job. Danny is such a beautiful boy. Even his teachers at school say, "I don't know what you did, but he's the kindest boy." The other day, there was a kid being bullied, and the teacher told Danny to go play with him, because she told me out of all the kids in the class, she knew that Danny would be the kindest to that little boy crying.

If you were to speak directly to another young woman who found herself unexpectedly pregnant, what would you say to her?

I would say: "You're not alone, and you're not a burden. And if you're in the position I was in, where you thought that God would condemn you, it's quite the opposite. He's going to show you so much mercy, and you're going to experience a love that you never, ever thought you could. Have hope and know that you don't have to go through this alone or make these decisions alone. And there's a huge community that's willing to help you and support you."

I always joke that Danny saved me. He saved my family. My family was going through some tough times, and even my dad will always say that Danny saved us. He saved us all.

Braedie and Brett married and live in Ontario, Canada, with Danny, close to Braedie's parents.

"Hope is a little girl..."

- Charles Péguy, poet

Literature can open up new understandings of God's love. The writings of Charles Péguy — a buoyant and singularly creative French poet, essayist, and Catholic revert who died in World War I — do just this. He is best known for his book-length poem, *The Portal of the Mystery of Hope*, wherein he personifies the virtue of hope as a little girl.

The following verses are excerpts from this work, in which Péguy tries to capture the voice of God the Father speaking of hope:

"My three virtues, says God.
The three virtues, my creatures.
My daughters, my children.
Are themselves like my other creatures.
Of the race of men.
Faith is a loyal Wife.
Charity is a Mother.
An ardent mother, noble-hearted.
Or an older sister who is like a mother.
Hope is a little girl, nothing at all."

"And yet it is this little girl who will endure worlds.
This little girl, nothing at all.
She alone, carrying the others, who will cross worlds past.
As the star guided the three kings from the deepest Orient.
Toward the cradle of my Son.
Like a trembling flame.
She alone will guide the Virtues and Worlds.
One flame will pierce the eternal shadows."

"The little one, the one who's still going to school.
And who walks.
Lost in her sisters' skirts....
...it's she in the middle who leads her older sisters along.
...without her they wouldn't be anything....
It's she, the little one, who carries them all."

Photo credit: Grant Whitty, 2025

SAINTS WHO HOPED

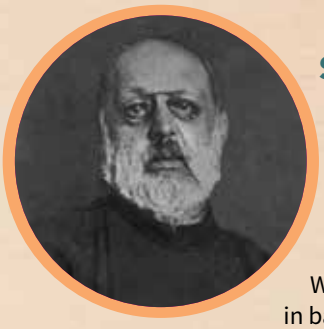
Every saint hoped. Here are a few:

by Sr. Fidelity Grace, SV

St. Margaret of Cortona

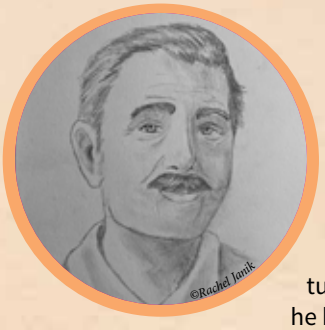
Born in medieval Tuscany, Margaret suffered the loss of her mother at age seven, and grew up starving for affection. High-tempered and wild, she sought love as a mistress for almost a decade and gave birth to a child. But her lover's eventual murder shocked her into a re-examination of her life. Moved to prayer and penance to amend for her sins, she was taken in by the Franciscans and received formation in the spiritual life. Her son eventually became a Franciscan friar. Her vivacious energy was now channeled into Eucharistic devotions, opening a hospital, serving the poor, and spreading the Gospel.

St. Brother Albert



Born to wealthy aristocrats in the late 19th century, Albert Chmielowski fought to reclaim his homeland of Poland from foreign invaders. When his horse was killed in battle, Albert suffered injury and capture. With an amputated leg, Albert was secretly smuggled to freedom in a coffin and landed in Belgium where his artistic talent was discovered and cultivated. When he eventually returned to Poland, fame left Albert empty and even hospitalized for depression. Through a conversation with a humble priest, he came to know God's mercy. After a failed attempt to join the Jesuits, Albert became a Third Order Franciscan, opened his apartment to the homeless, and sold his paintings to help them. He devoted his life to reforming the city shelter system and founded two religious congregations, now known as the Albertine Brothers and Sisters.

Venerable Matt Talbot



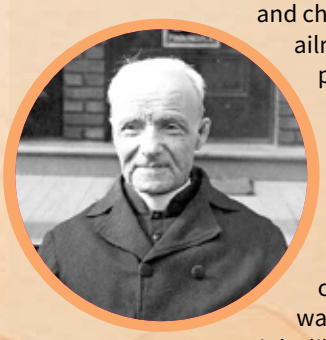
Born in 19th-century Dublin, Matt was one of twelve children. Employed by liquor merchants, and through the example of his father, who suffered from alcoholism, Matt also began to drink excessively as a teenager. For 15 years alcohol consumed him, until he became penniless, friendless, and felt forced to return home. Agreeing to take an alcohol-free pledge for three months, he returned to confession, began attending daily Mass, and paid back those from whom he had stolen. He read Scripture and the lives of the saints for hours nightly, and abstained from meat nine months of the year. The Lord called this son of St. Patrick home on his way to Mass on Trinity Sunday.

Servant of God Dorothy Day

The daughter of a nominally Protestant sports writer, Dorothy's childhood took her from Brooklyn to California to Chicago. Discovering her own passion for the pen and for social change, she became a journalist, avid pacifist, and even was arrested as a suffragist. Yet her "bohemian" lifestyle with a failed love affair and an abortion left her empty and confused, even attempting suicide. As a young reporter, it was in rooming with several regular Mass attendees, that Dorothy's heart changed. She saw how "worship, adoration, thanksgiving…were the noblest acts of which we are capable in this life" and that the Catholic Church was the "church of the poor." Then in the midst of a common-law marriage with an atheistic anarchist, she became pregnant again. Desiring Tamar Teresa's life to have more order and direction than hers, she asked a nun walking down the street about baptism for her daughter. While this brought her civil marriage to an end, it ultimately led Dorothy into the Catholic Church herself. Then, as the Great Depression hit America, Day helped launch the "Catholic Worker Movement," spreading hope to the poor through a newspaper and houses of hospitality.

St. Brother André Bessette

Alfred Bessette was born into a poor French Canadian family near Montreal and orphaned by age 12. A man of tremendous integrity and prayerfulness, Alfred pursued religious life. Despite initial rejection due to illiteracy and chronic stomach ailments, his parish priest promised the Holy Cross Brothers: "I am sending you a saint." Alfred became Brother André (the name of his pastor) and was assigned simple jobs like barber, custodian, and doorkeeper. His duty as doorkeeper soon became his hallmark ministry as Brother André listened patiently to visitors and prayed fervently for their needs, resulting in countless miracles. He gave all credit to God and the intercession of St. Joseph, for whom he built the oratory in Montreal, which now attracts two million pilgrims each year.



Waiting for God

by Sr. Lumen Gloriae, SV

One place where it can be difficult to let God love us is in waiting: waiting for something to change, waiting for suffering or difficulty to pass, waiting to understand what God is about in our lives. Our hearts have been made for God, to be filled by Him. Each of us have been created with a need for God that we cannot satisfy ourselves. We radically encounter this in our waiting. We each have the capacity for big desires, big hopes and dreams, both for ourselves and those around us. When our desires seem to go unfulfilled — especially our good desires for ourselves and those we love — the waiting itself can be a suffering.

The world we live in tends to reject suffering as meaningless, hopeless, useless. So it might come as a surprise to us that the Spanish word for "to wait" ("esperar") is the root of the word "hope" ("esperanza"). Hope is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul…that enters… where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf"; "it affords us joy even under trial: 'Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation'" (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1820*).

God wants to be with you in the waiting, to love you right there. And His presence with us is what instills meaning and hope in that very place, because it helps us to keep our eyes fixed on our end, which is the joy of heaven, forever. Sometimes, though, we cannot easily perceive His presence with us; He seems silent. When He doesn't seem to be responding, when He doesn't seem to be moving, it doesn't mean He isn't close to us.

In the Old Testament, even though Israel waited on the Lord for hundreds of years to free them from the grip of Egypt and slavery, God had never abandoned them. He wanted Moses to tell the people of Israel about His care for them: "I am concerned about you and about the way you are being treated in Egypt; so I have decided to lead you up out of the misery of Egypt into…a land flowing with milk and honey" (*Ex 3:16-17*). And today He cares for you just as He cared for Israel.

Mary can teach us how to wait, how to keep our hearts and hands open to receive what God desires to give, when He desires to give it. His timing can seem mysterious to us, just as it was mysterious to Mary, who "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (*Lk 2:19*). But she believed in God's promises, that He would do great things for her, even as she waited for His plan to be revealed in time.

God's love casts out all fear (*cf. 1 Jn: 4:18*). He brings about redemption and makes all things new. Today, we can make an act of trust in God's goodness and care for us, even if we don't yet see what He is doing. Little acts of faith, hope, love, and trust in God pave the way for even greater graces in our lives. They may not "solve the problem" of the suffering we encounter in waiting, but they open up a greater capacity for receiving God's presence with us, and they increase our capacity for joy when we do encounter God's work in the midst of suffering.

Wherever you are, whatever you're going through, the Lord is calling you to something new, and says, "Take courage!" You are made for God; you are made to be with Him in all things. Place all your hope in God, because He alone can satisfy.

The Secret of Marian Waiting

by Sr. Mary Grace, SV

It's easy to be discouraged in times of waiting, to dread the wait — or to waste the wait worrying. But Mary shows us waiting isn't time wasted — it's the secret to her life.

- Mary waited upon His Word, which directed the course of her entire existence.
- God promised a Son, and she waited for Him to come.
- He came, and she waited for Him to grow.
- Growing, He went off on mission, and she waited for Him to return.
- Going off, He went to His death, and she waited upon His last breath.
- Upon His death, she waited to be reunited at the Resurrection.
- After the Ascension, she waited for the Spirit to be poured out at Pentecost.
- Mary taught the disciples to wait, and the fire of His Spirit fell.
- The Church was born and grew by waiting for the Spirit's directives.
- Mary waited for the final reunion with her Son forever.

Would we dare wonder whether the life of the most spiritually powerful woman in the world was wasted in waiting?

In the waiting, God is doing His deepest work. Do not underestimate the power of pondering His plans unfolding, pondering what He is about. Do not be afraid to wait on the Lord.

In waiting, God is doing His deepest work.

He is with us in our suffering.

HOPING IN THE MIDST OF *infertility*

By Sr. Fidelity Grace, SV

1 in 10 couples carry the hidden cross of infertility. The heartache of not having children can cause stress, isolation, shame, envy, and desperation. It may even feel like divine punishment. But like every suffering on earth, infertility is not God's original plan for the human person but a consequence of the Fall. God our Father thirsts for us to be full of life (*cf. Gen 1:28*). Jesus is intimately familiar with the barren wilderness (*cf. Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13*) and yearns to meet us there until we can rest refreshed in the Promised Land with Him.

Deeply sensitive to the gift and beauty of marriage and children, the Church supports technologies that help a couple in achieving pregnancy naturally through the marital act and natural fertility cycle. Out of love, we are asked to avoid assisted reproductive technologies due to the moral problems associated with separating life and love. Yet every person God willed to exist has immeasurable dignity, regardless of how he or she was conceived — including the 10 million children born globally through assisted reproductive technologies like *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) and artificial insemination. Every person is made in God's image. And the Church tries to reach out to couples struggling with infertility, offering hope through natural means of fertility care.

Dr. Anne Nolte and Dr. Maria Wolfs are faith-filled physicians trained through the Pope Paul VI Institute for Natural Procreative Technology (NaProTechnology), and share their stories.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

FEMM (Fertility Education and Medical Management)

Springs in the Desert: Catholic Infertility Ministry

NaProTechnology

Gianna Center

DR. MARIA WOLFS, M.D.

As the daughter of a surgeon and a pediatrician, medicine was a natural path for Maria Wolfs. While serving as a medical volunteer for World Youth Day, Toronto, she discovered NaProTechnology, and heeding Pope John Paul II's call to "be not afraid," pursued this path. Dr. Wolfs is an endocrinologist and fertility consultant at the same Toronto hospital in which she was born.

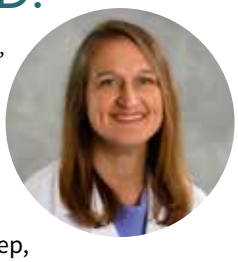
My husband and I had a journey with infertility. If we even slightly took our eyes off of Jesus, we fell into discouragement and frustration. St. Ignatius points out that discouragement is always from the devil because it clouds hope. After years of trying to conceive by our own efforts — with the best medical care, medications, and surgeries, even with prayers, novenas and pilgrimages — we started to realize that we could not control life by working harder. Slowly, our prayers changed from pleading for a child to praying for our fruitfulness and for His will in our lives. Our journey was a call to trust, surrender, and rest in the hands of One Who loves us and Whose promises will be fulfilled.

It is only with faith in the redemptive value of suffering that I have the courage to accompany those who suffer and help them find meaning in the suffering. Do you think God wants your good? Often there's that cry of, "No! He has forgotten and abandoned us!" Accompaniment is all about starting with the "yes." God always wants what's best for you. Our parents' love, no matter how flawed or even absent, is a tangible sign of the ultimate love of God that willed our existence — a love that is personal and able to draw good out of everything.

One of the deepest calls in medicine is to share hope with our patients. Even Hippocrates is quoted as saying to his disciples: "Cure sometimes, treat often, and comfort always." What brings comfort? The message of hope! And hope is a person: Jesus Christ. Even if not mentioned by name in every patient interaction, Jesus is the origin of our hope. Hope goes far beyond a positive attitude, because in this world we don't see every disease cured. Hope is an unshakeable trust and assurance that the promises of God will be fulfilled — in His timing — and that includes eternity! This trust is based on what He has done for us in Jesus, through His death and Resurrection (*cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1135*).

My husband and I had a journey with infertility. If we even slightly took our eyes off of Jesus, we fell into discouragement and frustration.

DR. ANNE NOLTE, M.D.



A Pennsylvania-native trained in family medicine, Dr. Nolte is the founding director of the Gianna Center for Women's Health and Fertility in New York City and has been journeying with women and couples for 15 years.

I work with people who are struggling with infertility. The longing to have a child is so deep, so intense. It is such a painful journey with a suffering that is really hidden. Most people going through it feel very isolated; they're in a lot of pain, and they're not talking to people about it. It can create a lot of desperation. Many times, by the time they've come to me, they've never heard the Church's teachings on permissible fertility treatment. They just want a child. Many people can't understand why an intervention that leads to the birth of a child is anything other than a good thing. So, when I speak to couples, the starting point is always compassion for and empathy with their suffering. My husband and I were never blessed with children. Many times patients feel like nobody knows what they're going through, so it gives them some comfort to know that I do.

In medical school, people would say to me, "You're Catholic. You're not going to prescribe birth control, do abortions, or do IVF. What are you possibly going to offer women?" As a result, I learned about NaProTechnology. This incredible approach which empowers women through teaching them about their bodies — recognizing what different symptoms and sensations tell them about their hormones, and recognizing how paying attention to these signs and symptoms — can be a phenomenal diagnostic tool that can identify abnormal problems with hormones, ovulation, and conditions like endometriosis. It was so comprehensive, so thorough, and I thought to myself, "This is just good medicine." What was so striking was that in NaPro, everything was geared toward listening to the woman, figuring out what was wrong with her reproductive system, and using tools we have to restore health and normal function — which is what we did in medical school when we studied heart, lungs, kidneys, etc.

So, when couples come to us asking about IVF, we meet people where they are. We're clear about what we do and don't do and if they ask us why, we happily share it, but we don't preach to them. Our love for them preaches to them. And, because I have a responsibility to inform the couple about the science and the statistics, I usually start with the medical risks they typically haven't been told. From the first moments of conception, I encourage parents to maintain the spirit of receiving the gift with open hands.

What I would first say is if couples have been told IVF is your only hope, I would encourage them to look further. We have natural, medical alternatives that get to and correct root causes which would allow them to conceive naturally. Despite the fact that we have effective treatments for many people, nobody has a 100% success rate. If patients do not conceive in time, we think about alternatives like adoption and foster care. It's a call to trust that the Lord is completely faithful and will bring their deepest desires to fulfillment, though it might look different than they thought.

Natural Womanhood

Find a Fertility Care Center

Donum Vitae

Archdiocese of New York Infertility Resources

The danger of SELF-RELIANCE

by Sr. Maria Frassati, SV

Independence isn't a bad thing. But in our spiritual life, we can tend to rely on ourselves in a toxic way, refusing to let ourselves be carried by the Heavenly Father who cares for us. It's part of the ancient old curse of sin. In the Garden of Eden, where the tempter led us to distrust the Father, we came to a faulty conclusion: the Father won't give us the desire of our hearts, so we must grasp for it ourselves. The Fall began the perpetuation of a lie that resurfaces in every human heart throughout time: God won't take care of me, so I must take care of myself. And, sometimes it looks like we've done a good job, especially when we carry on like this for years.

Some ancient Greek philosophers, the Stoics, believed they found the secret to peace: by controlling one's response to the emotions and remaining indifferent to them. After all, the passions are often out of line with right reason. They thought that if we could master ourselves, refusing to let our passions dominate us, we would live a life of virtue and true freedom. Their psychological tactics have been employed in psychology and even military training.

It seems attractive — doesn't one truly find peace when we refuse to let external things bother us? When we master ourselves, so to speak?

Well, yes and no. Authentic virtue involves an integration of the passions, guided by right reason. But this isn't enough for true peace. In those shameful moments when we're forced to face our wounds, we come to the truth the hard way: we can't master ourselves. Alone, we can't tame our own passions, and we can't heal our own brokenness. St. Paul admits, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (*Rm 7:15*). **Anyone who has tried to white-knuckle life has found a sure road to discouragement.** Getting by on our own sheer grit may last a while, giving us the illusion of stability. But it always ends in burn out and despair.

To their credit, the Stoics did the only thing humanity knew to do: rely on reason. It's only natural. But healing our broken nature requires the supernatural. The good news is that God's grace heals and elevates our human nature. Jesus has given His life for us and to us, and He longs for us to receive it.

Jesus, gazing through tears at a rebellious, self-reliant Jerusalem, lamented "Would that you, even you, knew on this day the things that make for peace!" (*Lk 19:42*). He ached for his flock to allow themselves to be gathered and protected by Him, resting over His heart (*cf. Lk 13:34*). Even now, He is thirsty for our trust.

The virtue of hope turns self-reliance into God-reliance. Instead of trusting in our own strength, we look to the Lord to be our strength (*cf. Ps 118:14*). Instead of navel-gazing and trying to heal our own brokenness, our gaze is turned towards the Divine Healer who wants to heal us and provide every grace to help us grow in union with Him.

Most virtues aim at perfecting our humanity in the supernatural realm. But hope, like the other theological virtues, aims at nothing less than God Himself. He Himself is the end, and the fruit of abiding in Him is authentic peace that no one can take away — not even ourselves. We can rest in confidence that, paradoxically, He is also the means by which we gain this confidence. **He will draw us to Himself if we simply let Him.**

Jesus is thirsty for our trust.

HOLY SATURDAY HOPING

A poem by Sr. Marie Veritas, SV

Blessed Mother Speaks to the Apostles on Holy Saturday

I am consumed
By the fire of sorrow
And the fire of joy.
They are the same fire.
My tears are equal parts
Grief and triumph.
Only God could do this.
Only my Son could do this.

He has gathered His brood
Under my afflicted wings.
I see Him in my heart;
A gulf of weeping and exaltation
Stretches out between us —
A chasm of sorrow
In the chests of broken men
Who batter the dimness
With anguish.

Come, my sons, My Son.
Let us weep
With light between our thoughts,
With the taste of His Word
Still on our tongues.
Let us heave our tears
With fullness and sorrow
And with expectation,
For the blood of the Lamb
Is not wasted;
The hyssop was not lifted
To His mouth in vain.

The torrent from His side
Soaked my soul.
I am a reservoir for you
Who are afraid.

YOUR LIFE IS GOOD

by Sr. Joseph Mary Nazareth, SV

Death was never part of God's plan for us; it entered the world as a result of sin. God made us for everlasting union with Himself and so we rightly recoil from death, because we bear within ourselves an eternal seed (*cf. Gaudium et Spes, 18*). The good news is that God's plan for life and love could not be thwarted: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (*Jn 3:16*). Through Jesus' death and resurrection, Love Himself has conquered death, setting us free from the grave and offering us a share in His victory.

Dr. Cecily Saunders (1918-2005), founder of the modern hospice movement and leader in developing palliative care, dedicated her life to understanding and responding to the needs of the dying. Dr. Saunders combined her deeply-held Christian faith with groundbreaking clinical expertise, pioneering new ways to use medication to relieve pain which allow palliative care physicians today to expertly control symptoms and make it possible for us to live natural death peacefully. As, Pope St. John Paul II wrote in *The Gospel of Life*: "The request which arises from the human heart in the supreme confrontation with suffering and death…is above all a request for companionship, sympathy, and support... It is a plea for help to keep on hoping when all human hopes fail" (*#67*).

> God desires me to be with Him forever. Love is not defeated by death.

Dr. Saunders' years of experience convinced her that hope is born within authentic, loving accompaniment: "One continually sees that faith in God and His care is made infinitely easier by faith in someone who has shown kindness and sympathy." She believed that all the needs of the dying were summed up in Christ's words in the garden of Gethsemane: "Watch with Me" (*Mt 26:38*). "Those words did not mean 'understand what is happening' when they were first spoken. Still less did they mean 'explain' or 'take away'… 'Watch with me' means above all, just 'be there," she explained. Remaining close to the dying, and receiving them with reverence in their vulnerability and dependence, reveals to them the goodness of their being; it is to say, "You matter simply because you are you."

Dr. Saunders passionately believed that when a cure is not possible, there is always more to be lived together, and she firmly taught that the dying have so much to teach us, **"if we will only look at their dignity through their dependence . . . and if we will see our own need reflected in theirs."**

In my experience as a palliative care nurse I constantly saw how the last months, weeks, or even days of a person's life can become the most significant; everything that is unimportant falls away and life becomes about what is truly essential: the relationship of love, given and received. I came to realize that each person I cared for was a prophetic witness of the truths that every human heart longs to hear: *I am loved for who I am, not for anything I can do, have, or produce; I am precious to God simply because I exist, and He desires me to be with Him forever. And love is not defeated by death; it always holds the promise of forever.* The fact that we grieve the loss of a loved one is proof of this. Holding these truths before our eyes is the great gift that the dying give us; as Dr. Saunders once said, "We need the dying as much, if not more than they need us."

Dr. Saunders observed, **"Hope grows out of facing reality as well as we can.** We often miss it because we duck reality and opt out of the struggle. Yet, man seems to be made to look forward." Ramsey, a patient Dr. Saunders often spoke of, who became blind and inhibited in speech due to an inoperable brain tumor, witnessed to this when he wrote in his diary two weeks before he died: "I don't know how it will happen, but the sense that Jesus will find me and make me all that I am, and more, is not too far away…. I seem to be at the beginning of my life, with God and that is amazing."

The truth is that this life is only part of our lives. The liturgy of the Church reminds us that in death "life is changed, not ended." Jesus has promised that whatever lies before us, He is waiting to meet us with His love: "Even though I walk through the valley of death, You are there… You give me comfort" (*Ps 23*). As Dr. Saunders observed, in the end "[t]he Christian answer to the mystery of suffering is not an explanation, but a Presence."

Citations from Watch with Me. Inspirations for a life in hospice care. *Cecily Saunders. Mortal Press, 2003.*

FINAL VOWS 2025

Through prayer, and penance, and the vows, [Sisters of Life] come to know the Word, so intimately that we become completely identified with Christ, so that you can't tell where a Sister leaves off and Christ begins, or Christ leaves off and a Sister begins.

- John Cardinal O'Connor

August 6, 2025 / St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York

Left to right: Sr. Maria Augustine of Mary's Joy, SV; Sr. Léonie Thérèse of the Way of the Cross, SV; Sr. Beata Victoria of the Father's Promise, SV

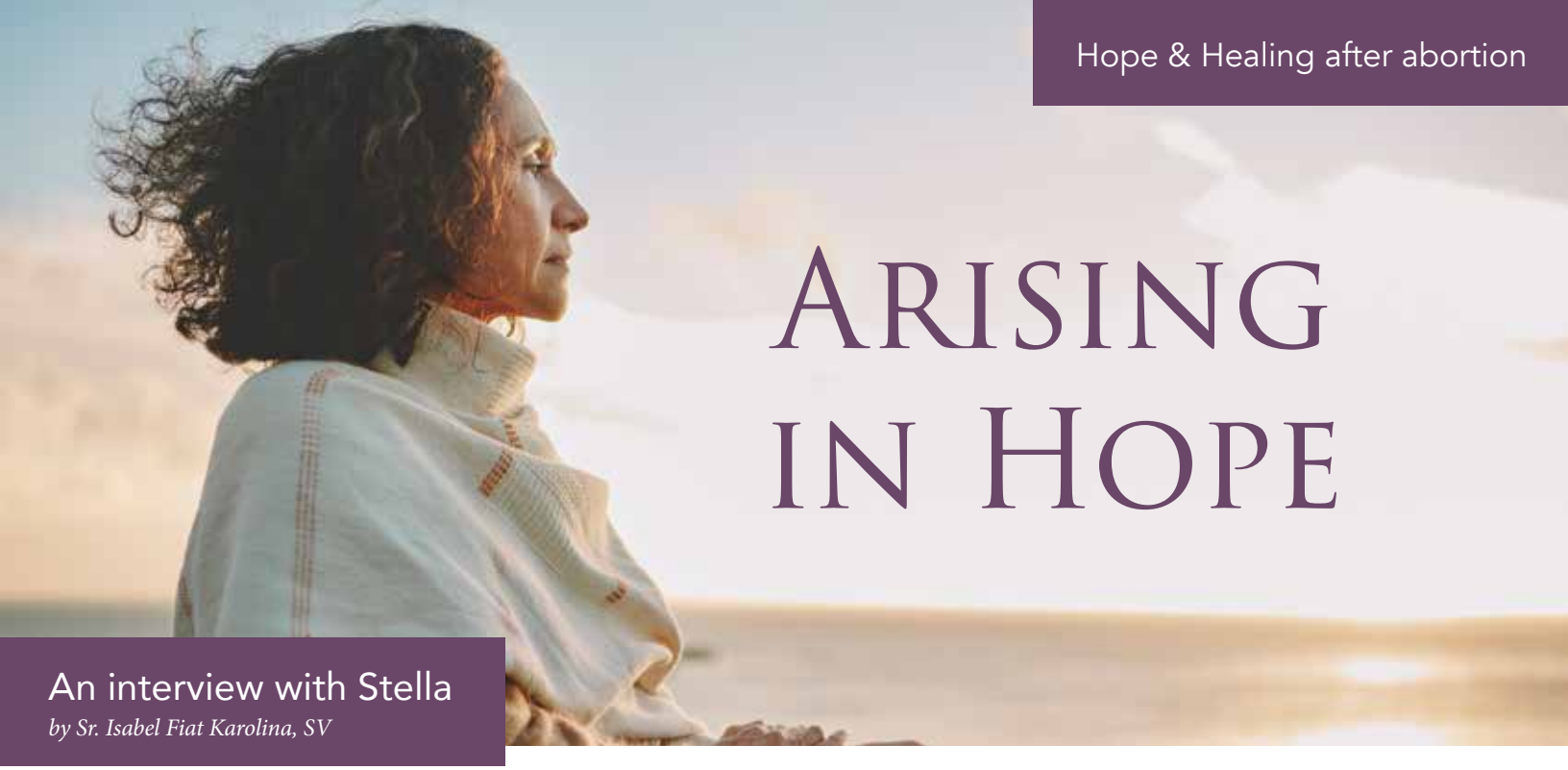
FIRST VOWS 2025

July 5, 2025 / Sacred Heart Parish, New York

Left to Right: Sr. Lucy Maranatha Joy, SV; Sr. Abigail Margaret, SV; Sr. Maríae Cor Jesu, SV; Sr. Ancilla Pacis, SV; Sr. Magdalene Clare John, SV

"*I am home.* These words echoed in my heart as I crossed the sanctuary of St. Patrick's Cathedral. Filled with the steady assurance of the Father's love, I pronounced my vows with a deep sense of peace, joy, and hope."

-Sr. Léonie Thérèse, SV



Arising in Hope

An interview with Stella

by Sr. Isabel Fiat Karolina, SV

Stella was very involved at her local parish and was just beginning to volunteer with the Sisters of Life when God invited her to begin healing from her abortion many years before. She found hope as freedom grew in her heart.*

How did you begin your journey of healing after abortion?

Even though I have always been very active in different church groups, I never felt worthy of joining the pro-life groups. The only thing I allowed myself to do was to pray the pro-life rosary. I would stand on the outskirts of the garden where they prayed, because I felt like a hypocrite. One day, the Sisters of Life came to our church and shared that they needed help with translations for their Spanish Hope & Healing ministry. I thought, "I can do that." As I was helping them translate materials for the Mass of Remembrance, I was actually living it myself. I wept as I translated. At that time, I named my baby and another baby I had miscarried. But when I was finished translating, I somehow couldn't find the document. I had to translate it again!

> I was able to let God's grace pour all over me. Once you allow God to act in your life, everything changes.

At the same time, my little niece was terminally sick and my whole family was leaning on me to support them. My parish priest saw how much I was carrying and encouraged me to go on a retreat with the Sisters. But when he invited me, I said, "You don't understand — I really, really need to go on a retreat with the Sisters." I had decided I would talk to them about my abortion.

My husband and I had planned to have dinner with that same priest one Saturday, but he cancelled, because he "had something that day." It was the day I went to my first Day of Prayer and Healing, and when I arrived at the convent there was our priest friend — a total surprise to both of us! It was his first time helping the Sisters in this way! It was blessing after blessing after blessing. I felt so supported. Since then, even as I support my family, I feel an inner peace, and I know it comes from God. It doesn't mean the difficult situations have gone away, but I face them with a different attitude. Now I know that even in the moments I thought I was alone, God was there with me.

Since then, how have you found hope in your journey?

We recently had a retreat day (for those who have experienced abortions) and for the first time I did not feel sadness and the need to cry and cry my heart out. On the contrary, I felt happy. That is a great blessing! Through all these years, I have been noticing how God has been working in me and in my family, especially with my husband. He has always been a wonderful husband, but I did not feel worthy of love, and so there was something missing in our relationship. I still feel the pain of what happened, but I don't look back and feel the burden any more. I am happy! I knew God had forgiven me, but now I have forgiven myself. I was able to let God's grace pour all over me.

How would you define hope — especially to someone who is struggling to believe things can get better?

Hope is the certainty that things can get better even when in the moment it might not look like it. In my journey of healing, I was surrounded by a love which gave me a sense of trust. We always fear judgment, but like Mother Mary, the Sisters' eyes told me, "I am here for you, and there is no judgement. This is a safe place." And whenever I see the other women who are on the journey of healing, we see each other only with love. We can rest the weight that we carry on each other. We can't do it alone. Prayer — especially with others — is very powerful. Once you really unload the weight and allow God to act in your life, then everything changes.

For more information about our mission of Hope & Healing after abortion, visit:

sistersoflife.org/healing-after-abortion

**Names and details have been changed for the sake of anonymity.*

What Jesus says is for you.

By Sr. Mary Grace, SV

Hope isn't a coping mechanism or an optional add-on; it's the only way to fullness of life. Hope is one of the three supernatural and superabundant gifts God gave us at Baptism. They're superpowers we didn't earn or learn, given free of charge, and no conditions apply. Yet a gift unwrapped and uncherished is like a life half-alive.

That's why the enemy always wants to downplay God's goodness and the gifts we already have. He tempts us to doubt, to give in to cynicism, to fall into discouragement, to think that perhaps what Jesus says is not for us. "The opposite of hope isn't despair, but cynicism," writes Adam Young, a Christian therapist. That is, the opposite of hope is disbelief in newness, that things aren't really that good or can't change — in a word, distrust.

Distrust can manifest as self-doubt or as fear of the future: the lies that say, "I don't have what it takes. I'm not enough. I'm not safe. Everything won't be okay."

But the truth is that death no longer has rights to the conclusion of our stories. God took on death and hell, and won, and the weight lifted. It's not all on us to figure it out, to make sense of our lives, or to manufacture meaning.

Anxiety and worry were never a prerequisite for finding Jesus. We don't have to hit rock bottom, wait till the last moment, try everything else, or look high and low to find the God we were created to live with.

Our God is findable. He's not a distant, careless dictator. We can search, find, and belong, without buying our way into His favor.

Which leads us to the incomparable and vital place of trust. If the opposite of hope is cynicism and distrust, then the fullness of hope is a heart that trusts. Trust is not positive thinking, finger-crossing, or pushing through life; it's an activated faith in Jesus. It's keeping our hands in His, our ears to His words, and our eyes on His plans unfolding around us.

Hope is the state of a rightly ordered heart that believes Jesus is the key to my happiness. At Mass, the Priest prays that we may be "... safe from all distress as we await the blessed hope and coming of our Savior Jesus Christ." Happiness in heaven — yes — but also here.

God is providing for us even before we perceive it, taking care of us before we even conceive the idea of crying out. But the calling out is crucial, because when we do, we give God permission to act in new and powerful ways in our lives.

Hope is the sound of a heart that stakes its stability in what Christ says. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, "Prayer is asking." The asking doesn't determine the answering. In trust, we learn to lean in and let go. But it requires boldness.

Boldness is a form of reliance on the Holy Spirit. It's not the courage of a few but the call of every Christian. And its source isn't self-confidence, but a "God-fidence" that requires not just a moment of surrender but a lifestyle of leaning into the Savior.

Unless we are willing to lean in and stay in a real relationship with Christ, cynicism is a guarantee. The heresy of Pelagianism tempts us with the false claim that we have what it takes without God's help. It's a barrier to hope and the cause of discouragement, because it denies dependence on God, the very source of our hope.

Our weakness doesn't need to be an obstacle to hope. It is, as Servant of God Archbishop Luis Martinez would say, our credentials for receiving the Holy Spirit, our Advocate, who fights for our hearts and our joy. We can always, without expection, reject discouragement as a tactic of the evil one.

Every revival in the world begins with the inner revival of one soul. Let us let go and lean into Christ, and He will give us hope that we are made for God. We are made to be with Him in all things. We can place our hope in Him.

HOPE

~~CYNICISM~~

~~DISTRUST~~

~~DESPAIR~~

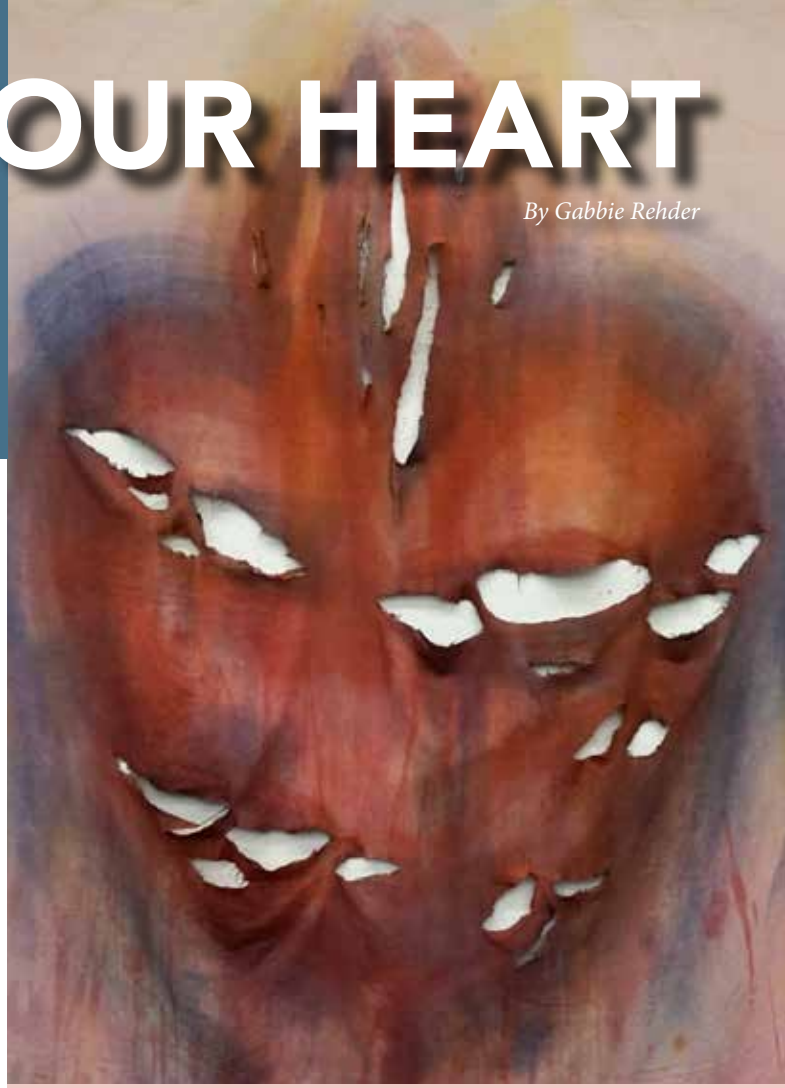
~~DISCOURAGEMENT~~

GIVE JESUS YOUR HEART

Jesus broke through the wall, and hope entered in.

By Gabbie Rehder

Gabbie Rehder is the sibling of Sr. Jordan Rose, SV. We were honored to interview Gabbie in our 2018 Winter IMPRINT issue. Gabbie had Kearns-Sayre syndrome and passed away from heart complications on January 12, 2025. The following text is composed of excerpts from Gabbie's blogs, wherein she describes her inspiration for writing the "Take This Heart" prayer after a difficult cardiology appointment.



"Here is a piece of my heart I want to share with all of you. I wrote this litany, 'Take this Heart', a year ago when I was battling deep depression. I wrote this through tears in adoration... Mary's heart was the first painting I was drawn to after writing this prayer for hope. The sword marks resemble my own heart: 'And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart' (*Lk 2:19*); 'You yourself a sword will pierce, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed' (*Lk 2:35*).

"I had a pretty scary doctor appointment last year... It was the emotions I was feeling after the appointment that led me down a spiral staircase of despair. The emotions of fear, sorrow, and hopelessness came over me. The reality of my brokenness became real again. The feeling of being done. The tears came from a heart that was tired and could do no more. These appointments are reminders of what I cannot do.

"I visualized a glass wall in front of me, and Jesus on the crucifix above the altar...on the other side of the glass. I could see and know the love of Jesus but my heart could not feel the love because of that 'stupid' wall there. If I opened the door, the glass would shatter. I visualized the same crucifix but this time the wall of glass [was] all shattered on the floor. I'm now seeing that I can't fix all the broken pieces of glass. I have to give this brokenness to Jesus on the cross. Only Jesus can restore what is broken.

"[I wrote in] my prayer journal: *...Take this heart, Father. And transform my heart to beat with Yours, Lord — to beat with Your Spirit of merciful love. To love everyone I meet through Your heart, Your most Sacred Heart.*

"After I wrote this, I opened my Holy Hour book and read the following quote from Pope John Paul II: 'The presence of Jesus in the tabernacle must be a kind of magnetic pole attracting an even greater number of souls enamored of Him, ready to wait patiently to hear His voice and, as it were, to sense the beating of His heart.'

"I was stunned! I used those very words, 'heartbeat', in my journal. **Jesus was responding to me through His beating heart.** I continued to read, 'In the Mass and in Eucharistic Adoration we meet the merciful love of God that passes through the Heart of Jesus Christ' (*Pope John Paul II*). 'Hope in him, hold firm and take heart. Hope in the Lord!' (*Ps 27:14*).

"The words 'take heart' have encouraged me every single day since heart failure. 'Take heart' has helped me cling to Jesus and to trust. In this lifetime, we need encouragement to become courageous. I want to be a voice of encouragement! The words 'take heart' have given me hope and courage. I want to be brave and bold. Trusting and filled with hope, I want to give my best and encourage others to do the same.

"I am sharing this...with love and peace in my heart. **Remove the glass wall. Give Jesus your heart. Take heart. His heart beats for you, too."**

Take this Heart

A Prayer for Hope

When I feel like I am not enough, **take this heart.**
When I am overcome with sorrow, **take this heart.**
When darkness hides the light, **take this heart.**
When I do not feel Your love, **take this heart.**
When every answer leaves me hopeless, **take this heart.**
When fighting depression, **take this heart.**
Through tears, **take this heart.**
In my brokenness, **take this heart.**
When I have nothing left to give,
Jesus, I give You my heart.
When my heart fails me, **Jesus, I give You my heart.**
Let this suffering not be wasted.
Take this heart, and give my heart hope.

"Only you can use your freedom to give this suffering to God. Do not waste it." - Fr. Daniel Barnett's words to Gabbie

Written by Gabbie Rehder *Artwork by Erin K. McAtee*

www.gabbierehder.org

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