

Christian Hope

What does it mean to live with Christian hope? Hope is often mistaken for optimism. An optimist might say something like, “Things will work out – they always do.” But sometimes things do not work out. Christian hope tells us that God will never turn His back on our efforts to do what is good and just for the sake of His Kingdom. We have this assurance through Jesus, who died and rose so that we might have fullness of life forever. Through baptism, we share in His risen life and gift of the Spirit, poured into our hearts.

What does practicing the virtue of hope look like in our schools, homes and parishes?

Hope looks like prayer: We turn to God in prayer because we believe God listens to His children. And so, we begin each morning with our students offering our day to God, and asking for His help. We gather during holy seasons and at special times in the school year to pray and celebrate Eucharist with our parish priests. Parents often bless their children at bedtime; families pray the rosary and say grace before meals, asking God’s blessing. We turn to the sacraments at the most important times in our lives - we believe, we have unshakeable hope, we pray.

Hope looks like justice, or *right relationship with God and neighbour*. Our work for justice springs from the sure hope that God is with us as we strive to see that all His children have food, water, shelter, education and everything they need to have a dignified life. And so, we defend persons who are unborn, disabled or elderly who cannot defend themselves. We encourage students speak up for those who are bullied, and work together to make our schools and communities safe for all.

Hope looks like kindness: When persons around us choose gossip or insults, we hold fast to the promise of the Gospel and offer a kind word. When a student is excluded, we embrace the law of love and offer them a chance to belong. When grace has carried us through much suffering, we offer hope to those who struggle, with a listening ear and our own trust in God’s mercy. Hope is that hug or encouraging gesture given when you have nothing left to give, because it’s what Jesus would do. I believe, I hope, I love.

Here is a short explanation of hope, taken from the Eastern Ontario Catholic School Board’s Character Development resource, *Our Language, Our Story*:

Hope

Trusting God’s promises in prayer and work for justice.

The language of our story speaks of hope. The theological virtue of Christian hope is God’s gift to us at Baptism, which unites us with the risen Christ. By hope, we desire the happiness of the Kingdom and eternal life. Hope makes us able to trust in God’s promises, no matter what the obstacles. It keeps us from despair and presumption, and is expressed principally in prayer. Hopeful people live the Gospel with joy; they work for peace and justice on earth despite facing many obstacles. They trust that God’s plan will be fulfilled, even if not in their lifetime. Hope is visible in our Catholic schools whenever we find prayer, trust in God’s faithfulness, and work for peace and justice.

The Gospel of John tells us that Christ our light “has shone in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (Jn 1: 5) In times of uncertainty, we choose to hope over fear, clinging to Him: praying, working for justice and treating one another with kindness, trusting in the Holy Spirit’s help on the road to everlasting life.