

January 13, 2019

Come and Share Your Story of Hope!

**Come at 7pm this Thursday, January 17 to discuss the book distributed at Christmas
"Beautiful Hope" Come and share your story of hope!**

We are looking forward to a lively discussion. Many of you have already commented that they found our Christmas book inspirational. For some, the book's subtitle said it all: "Finding hope every day in a broken world". As a parish community, as a "family of families", we can learn from one another, we can help one another on our spiritual journey.

All of us have experienced, though in different degrees, suffering and pain. Many of us have discovered that **our only hope is in God, our only hope is in Jesus!** Pope Francis in his introduction to "Beautiful Hope" writes: "Hope never disappoints. We need hope... The only certainty that will save us is that **hope in God**. It will save us because it is strong and enables us to journey in life with **joy**, with the will to do good, with the will to attain **eternal happiness**."

Since the beginning of Advent, I have emphasized the importance of **hope!** You will recall the first banner was a lit candle with the word "**Hope**". It reminded us that "**Jesus, our light is our hope**". And yes, He is our only hope. On the following three Sundays of Advent, the focus moved to **Peace, Joy and Love** (the second, third, and fourth lit candles). They remind us that if we have hope in Jesus, we will find peace, joy, and love in him. **God is love! Jesus is God**. Only through Jesus, only through **His Spirit** can we enjoy the great fruits of Peace, Joy and love! But it all begins with keeping **hope in God**. I recall the two difficult months I spent last spring (May and June) following open heart surgery. I was asked by my bishop to rest and recover fully before returning to Waldorf as your pastor. These were two very long and difficult months. Your many prayers kept my hope in God alive. I knew that I was not alone and that your prayers to God would help me to accept God's will, and not my self-centered will.

At the beginning of the January 17 meeting, we will welcome your sharing which one of the 18 stories in "Beautiful Hope" has touched you the most and why. We will then expand the sharing to our own personal stories of hope, including how we have seen/known friends, family members or ourselves able to overcome challenging situations (e.g. loss of a loved one, lack of faith, financial crisis, marital difficulties, addiction, depression, or major physical illness).

We will conclude the meeting with sharing personal reflections on how to renew our spiritual formation at OLHOC. In that context, we would like to hear especially from those of you who have been active participants in recent or on-going faith formation programs. I hope that the spiritual enthusiasm of the over 100 participants in "**The Gift**" (Life in the Spirit seminar) last fall can be spread more widely within our parish. The goal is to facilitate **Spiritual Renewal** at our parish, individually and collectively.

As we celebrate this weekend the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, all readings point to the power of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah (chapter 40:1-5, 9-11) prophesies that John the Baptist will prepare the way of the Messiah and "the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all people shall see it together... Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! **Here comes with power the Lord God**." St. Luke (3:15-16, 21-22) describes the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist: "The heavens were opened and the **Holy Spirit** descended upon Jesus in a bodily form like a dove, and a voice came from heaven: You are my **beloved Son**, with you I am well pleased"; this the first revelation of the **Holy Trinity: Father** (the voice from heaven), **Son** (Jesus) and the **Holy Spirit**. As proclaimed by John the Baptist, Jesus is the one who will "**Baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire**". St. Paul in his letter to Titus (3:4-7) proclaims that "when our Savior appeared, He saved us through the bath of rebirth and **Renewal by the Holy Spirit**."

Come Holy Spirit! Strengthen our hope and help our spiritual renewal!

*One in Christ,
Father Alain*

