

FAITH SHARING GROUP ~ HANGING ONTO HOPE: REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR FINDING "GOOD" IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD by Sr. Melannie Svoboda, SND

Week 1 Chapter 1-4

Check in Question: How has hope shaped your life, especially during times of uncertainty, difficulty, or change? What helps you hold on to hope when life feels overwhelming?

Opening Prayer

May we all hold hands with hope, our "little sister," as she helps us to move on the uphill path into the future.
May hope bring us ever closer to the fulfillment of our deepest longings and desires: oneness and love with each other, and complete union with the life, goodness, beauty, and joy of our God. Amen

What is hope?

1. Throughout this chapter, we explore hope as equal to faith and love, although it is often treated as the little sister of the three virtues. Do you see them as equals? Is one more important than the others? Why?
2. How do you recognize that your hope comes from God?

Longings and desires

3. Sister Melannie discusses several biblical heroes and what they hoped for. What is it that you are hoping for?
4. Ignatius speaks of holy daydreaming. Is this a practice you engage in? If so, how?
5. If Jesus asked you today, "What do you want me to do for you?" how would you answer?

Hope and the Imperfect World

6. Do you agree with Sr. Melannie that 70% of life is ambiguous?
7. What does Sr. Melannie mean when she says, "Reality is God's home address"?
8. There is a saying that God makes straight lines with crooked paths. Sr. Melannie suggests that God can bring goodness out of evil. What are your thoughts on this?

Challenges to Hope

9. Do you agree with Dante that hell is a place without hope?
10. Has it been your experience that most people are honest?
11. Do you make time in your day to dream with God? If not, could you imagine making room for this kind of prayer in your daily life?

Closing Prayer

For whom and what shall we pray?

Loving and faithful God,

You are the source of our hope, the One who meets us in the midst of life's uncertainties, unanswered questions, and crooked paths.

Teach us to embrace hope as more than wishful thinking. May it take its rightful place alongside faith and love, giving us the courage to trust in what we cannot yet see.

You know the longings of our hearts, even those we struggle to put into words. As Jesus asked the blind man, “What do you want me to do for you?” may we have the courage to name our deepest desires and bring them honestly before you.

Give us the imagination to dream with you, as Ignatius invites us to do. Help us recognize your presence not only in the extraordinary moments of life but also in the ordinary, imperfect reality of each day.

When the road ahead is unclear, help us resist the temptation to despair. When we encounter disappointment, suffering, or evil, remind us that you never abandon us and that even from brokenness, your grace can bring forth goodness.

May we never become people who live without hope, but instead become witnesses to hope for others. Teach us to see beyond what is, to trust in what can be, and to believe in what you are still bringing to life.

And when we cannot see the way forward, give us the grace to take the next step with you.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, our hope and our salvation.
Amen.