

Trillium Regional Chapter 2025
May 24, 2025
Presentation by Fr. Alix Poulin, OFM Cap

I'm really pleased to be here with you this morning. I was appointed National Spiritual Assistant just a few months before Covid arrived, so a lot of things have been put on the virtual back burner, not to mention the fact that Canada is such a big country that we already use a lot of remote technology to avoid expensive travel.

But sometimes we really do need to meet up in the flesh, because how many people suffered from isolation when the great confinement of 2020 arrived. And it took another 2 years before we were able to get together again. I'm glad to be with you and to see people in the flesh, rather than on screen.

Pope Francis proposed a theme for this year: pilgrims of hope. We're already well into this jubilee year, and on the theme of hope, I'd like to read you a parable..

Four candles were burning slowly.

The atmosphere was so silent that we could hear their conversation.

The first said: "I am Peace!

I'm very fragile. And few people can keep me lit. I think I'm going to die out...

And the flame of peace began to fade, until it was completely extinguished.

The second candle said: "I am Faith!"

And since Peace no longer exists to light the world, I'm no longer indispensable, it makes no sense for me to stay lit any longer."

No sooner had Faith finished speaking, then a breeze blew over her and extinguished her.

Sadly, the third candle spoke up: "I am Love! Alone, I have no strength to stay lit. People leave me aside and don't understand my importance. They even forget to love those who are close to them."

And without further ado, Love faded away.

Suddenly, a child entered and saw the three candles extinguished.

"Why are you out?" You were supposed to be lit until the end!"

Saying this, the child began to cry.

Then the fourth candle spoke up:

“Don’t be afraid, as long as my flame burns brightly, we’ll be able to light the other candles.....you know, I’m Hope!”

And so the child lit the other three candles from the candle called “Hope”.

Sometimes it's good to hear parables. That's what Jesus did in his day: rather than giving encyclopedic definitions, he told stories that people could grasp without too much difficulty.

What can we say about hope?

Hope is an experience of which our father St. Francis spoke briefly when he wrote : Praise be You my Lord through those who grant pardon for love of You and bear sickness and trial.

Blessed are those who endure in peace, By You Most High, they will be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord through Sister Death,
from whom no-one living can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin! Blessed are they She finds doing Your Will.

No second death can do them harm. Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks,
And serve Him with great humility.”

Francis speaks of the hope that dwells in us when we consider the eternal life that awaits us. At the same time, he points out that we can miss the train, as we see in his canticle, unfortunately.

Perhaps the theme of hope did not occupy the speech or admonitions of Francis of Assisi as it did the words of Pope Francis.

I'd also like to quote what Monsignor Rino Fisichella said about the experience. He was being interviewed by a Catholic journalist.

Can we define hope? He said it's a dimension beyond definition. He reminded us of Saint Paul's words to the Romans that "hope does not disappoint. And so, Christian hope does not disappoint, since it is founded on “the love of God” that has been poured into hearts by the Holy Spirit. “And likewise, we can remember that ”nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Obviously, if we speak of hope as Christians, we must speak of eternal life. Are we talking about the eternal life that awaits us?

As we saw at the beginning, our father St. Francis was not afraid to address these questions.

Have you had a chance to get your hands on Pope Francis' latest book, his autobiography, which is called Hope?

At the beginning of the book, Pope Francis recounts a host of memories from his childhood, which I found interesting, and at the very end of the book he writes about the jubilee we are currently living, which he has dedicated to the pilgrimages of hope.

The Pope reminds us that Christian hope represents the certainty that we were born never to die again, that we were born for the heights, to enjoy happiness.

The Pope writes that Christian hope is invincible because it's not just wishful thinking. St Paul had already written that hope is also the helmet of salvation, i.e. protection for the head, for our thoughts, against our fears. For we can be tempted by a lazy, indolent voice that discourages, empties and whispers that effort is useless. And we have to remember that hope is a helmet, because we can't passively accept these conditions; we have to fight them.