

# Spiritual Reflections for the month of May 2025

Please choose a reflection and meditation

## Reflection for Jubilee Year of Hope

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, how are we to understand the Christian virtue of Hope?

In his book, “Bread for the Journey,” Henri J.M. Nouwen speaks to this true hope: “Optimism and hope are radically different attitudes. Optimism is the expectation that things---the weather, human relationship, the economy, the political situation, and so on---will get better. Hope is trust that God will fulfill God’s promises to us in a way that leads us to true freedom. The optimist speaks about concrete changes in the future. The person of hope lives in the moment with the knowledge and trust that all of life is in good hands”.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Rohr, OFM calls this kind of hope, “mystical hope” ‘It has something to do with presence—not a future good outcome, but the immediate experience of being met, held in communion, by something intimately at hand.’ [Daily Meditations]

‘Hope is not for easy times’ according to Joan Chittister, OSB, “Hope reminds us that there is nothing in life we have not faced that we did not, through God’s gifts and graces—however unrecognized at the time—survive. Hope is the recall of good in the past, on which we base our expectation of good in the future, however bad the present’, Furthermore she says that: “The spiritual task of life is to feed hope. Hope is not something to be found outside of us. It lies in the spiritual life we cultivate within.” [from her Vision and Viewpoint weekly newsletter, December 9, 2019.]

Finally, Pope Francis has a whole series of homilies on Hope addressed to his Wednesday general audiences in 2016 and 2017, [Vatican.va].

He tells us that ‘Hope is not based on what we can do or be, nor even on what we may believe in. Its foundation, that is, the foundation of Christian hope, is what we can be most faithful and certain of, that is to say, the love that God himself has for each of us’.

### Reflection Questions:

1. Is there anything new here for your understanding of the virtue of hope?
2. Any thoughts on why the world needs a Jubilee Year of Hope at this time?

*- Submitted by Sr. Yvonne Gray GTCC Spirituality Committee Chair & St. Anselm’s conference*

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1 - Quotes adapted from: [www.retreatreflectrenew.org/monthly-reflections/finding-hope-2020](http://www.retreatreflectrenew.org/monthly-reflections/finding-hope-2020)

## **A Shepherd to the Poor: Remembering Pope Francis**

*My fellow Vincentians: I hope this message finds you well and with peace in your hearts. With tenderness and deep respect, I want to share a beautiful and heartfelt tribute written by Mr John Barry, National President of SSVP/US in memory of our beloved Holy Father, Pope Francis. His passing has touched many of us in profound ways, and this reflection captures the spirit of his humble service, his unwavering compassion, and his devotion to the poor and the forgotten. As we continue to walk in faith, may this tribute not only honour his memory but also inspire us to carry forward his message of mercy, love, and hope. I pray that his legacy remains a light for all of us who strive, in our own simple ways, to follow Christ. Blessings, Dolores Watt, St Joseph the Worker Conference, York South*

### ***Excerpt from letter to members - the National Council President - USA***

In the passing of Pope Francis, the world has lost not only the Bishop of Rome but a tireless voice for the voiceless, a prophet of mercy, and a shepherd whose heart beat in time with the most forgotten of God's children. For those of us who have dedicated our lives to serving the poor and marginalized through our vocation to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, his life was a living gospel—both a challenge and a consolation.

Francis taught that charity is not simply about giving — it is about relationship. About drawing near. About breaking down the barriers that divide “us” and “them.” He wrote, “The poor are not people ‘outside’ our communities, but brothers and sisters whose sufferings we should share, in an effort to alleviate their difficulties and marginalization.” (World Day of the Poor, 2020) That vision transformed the Church. It transformed each of us.

Many of us who serve, in our encounters at people's homes, at shelters, at food pantries, and at recovery programs, saw in Pope Francis the embodiment of what we hope to be. His humility did not diminish his authority — it deepened it. His tenderness did not weaken his leadership — it defined it. He reminded us that the Church is most fully herself not when she stands in splendor, but when she kneels beside the wounded.

We loved Pope Francis not because he made our work easier, but because he made it holier. He called us to more. To see our volunteerism not as a duty, but as a Eucharistic act—a way of becoming bread broken and shared for others. He saw the poor not as a problem to solve, but as people to love. And he called on the whole Church to “go out to the peripheries,” where, he reminded us, Christ Himself is waiting.

In 2023, he wrote: “Where the poor are concerned, it is not talk that matters; what matters is rolling up our sleeves and putting our faith into practice through a direct involvement, one that cannot be delegated.” He never let us off the hook. And thank God he didn't. Because of him, countless hearts were lit with a fire of compassion, and many who once looked away from the poor began to look into their eyes—and see Christ.

Now, as we mourn him, we also thank God for the gift of his life. We thank God for the man who reminded us that the smell of the sheep is a sweet fragrance to the Good Shepherd. That mercy is the greatest expression of justice. That to serve the poor is not just a noble option—it is the heart of the Gospel.

For those of us in the trenches of mercy, in the homes of those in need, in the food lines and the shelter dormitories, in the hospital rooms and dining rooms, we carry his legacy forward. We will go on loving, not with words, but with deeds. We will go on seeing Christ in the poor, and we will go on knowing that Pope Francis is still praying for us — from the heavenly peripheries — still urging us to keep walking, keep loving, keep serving.

May his memory bless the Church. May his vision animate our mission. And may we, like him, choose every day to live a faith that comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable — until every tear is wiped away, and the poor are poor no more. — *John Barry, National Council President USA*