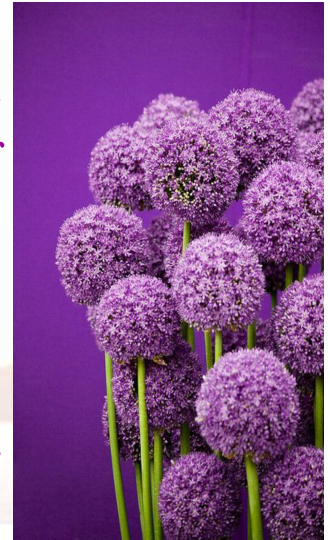




# The letter of the women's secular institute of THE HEART OF JÉSUS

*For I know well the plans I have in mind for you—oracle of the LORD—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope. When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me—oracle of the LORD—and I will change your lot; I will gather you together from all the nations and all the places to which I have banished you—oracle of the LORD—and bring you back to the place from which I have exiled you.*

*Jr 29,11-14*



**“IN HOPE WE WERE SAVED”**  
**Such is our JOY!**



(Heb 10:22-23). St. Peter encourages Christians to be “ready at any time to present a defense to anyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that is in you” (Pt 3:15). Hope is born from the encounter with Christ. “In that time, you did not have Christ, you did not have a right of citizenship with Israel, you were alien to the covenants and the promise, you had no hope and you were without God in the world (Eph 2:12).



*In* human experience, hope is a pilgrimage and an arduous quest. Each generation contributes to to build the world into a "New Heaven and a New Earth". From the very beginning, while humanity is expelled from Eden, human beings continue to believe and hope in the salvation of God. In this world, everyone is able to love himself and live for others.

## “SPE SALVI facti sumus”

“In hope we have been saved,” says Paul (Rom 8:24). With these first words of the encyclical Spes Salvi, Pope Benedict XVI invites us to a hope rooted in faith. Salvation is not a mere fact. Redemption is offered to us in the sense that a reliable hope has been given to us, by which we can face our present

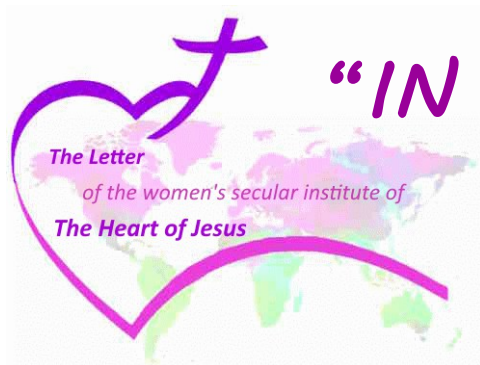


Faith is the essence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb 11). In the Bible, hope is a key word. Faith and hope are interchangeable. The Letter to the Hebrews closely links «the fullness of faith» to “the confession of our hope”

## Christian hope

- ◆ offers a future, not a future known in detail of what lies ahead, but the assurance that life does not end in nothingness.
- ◆ Christianity is not only a Gospel, in the sense of a «proclaimed» message, but also the »working» word of God that changes lives and leads to eternal life, itself guaranteed by death and resurrection of Christ.
- ◆ It is personal and ecclesial
- ◆ It involves the construction of the present world while orienting towards the eschatological world.





# “IN HOPE WE WERE SAVED”



## False expectations

**F**aith is trust in God. He who has faith trusts in God. But we go through difficult times and our hope then stumbles and leads us to feel the need to look for other beliefs or to rely on concrete and clear things. The Bible warns us against false hopes offered by the world .



**I**dols can be other gods such as divination, money, power seeking or freedom beyond all constraints, the absolute faith in our abilities that

leads us to ignore the Other and others. They are also manifested in modern secularism and the rejection of God. Through science and technology, humanity seeks to regain domination over creation - originally granted by God at the beginning but lost because of original sin. In the modern era<sup>1</sup>, there is a *new correlation between experience and a method that enables man to reach an interpretation of nature in accordance with its laws*” (SS 16) Thus man can dominate creation, bend it and put it at his service. The *“new correlation between science and practice would mean that domination over creation, given to man by God and lost by original sin, would be restored”* (SS 16) Today, with excessive hope in the salvation of science and technology - which is a way of restoring the garden of lost Eden - men no more



need faith. *“Now, this redemption, the restoration of the lost paradise is no longer to be expected from faith, but from relationship hardly discovered between science and practice.”* (SS17) Thus, hope also receives a new form: it is now called faith in progress. Faith in God is set aside or relegated to the private sphere without link with social and political life.



**C**hristian faith and hope are also challenged by reason, pragmatism or the desire for absolute freedom. It is hoped that a rational or reasonable faith would help men to reach the freedom they were longing for and build a new and perfect human community. A community where dependency does not exist, that is to say, where no one needs the other to live and reach one’s full humanity. A certain conception of reason and freedom comes into conflict with faith and the Church. Reason, understood here, is perceived as the opposite of “irrational”. The confusion stems from the fact that faith is often perceived as such, even though it in no way opposes reason. It humanizes it and opens it to love and transcendence. This conflict is further exacerbated by atheism and the politicization of reason and freedom in the hope of “building heaven on earth. Christian faith and hope are resolutely rejected. But the reality is that without God, humanity is in despair, becomes selfish, greedy and destructive...



*«On the other hand, we must also note that modern Christianity, faced with the successes of science in the progressive structuring of the world, has largely focused only on the individual and their salvation. In this way it has narrowed the horizon of its hope. It has not even sufficiently recognized the magnitude of its task, even if what it has continued to do for the training of man and for the care of the weakest and the suffering remains important. »* (SS 25) In this context, the need to practice and rediscover what Christian hope is appears urgent within the Church and in dialogue with non-Christians. Our world, in many places is in despair!

# "IN HOPE WE WERE SAVED"

## The true portrait of hope

**S**PE SALVI at number 4 questions us: is the encounter with God - revealing his face in Christ and opening his heart simply informative or can it also be performative transforming lives, freeing us through the hope born of this encounter?



**G**od is the foundation of hope. Not just any god, but a God with a human face, who loved to the very end, each person and humanity in its entirety. A God who became close to humanity because he came to dwell among men being ready to dialogue with them. His Kingdom is not an imaginary picture of the afterlife situated somewhere in a future that will never come. His Kingdom is present where he is loved and where his love reaches us. This love makes us feel the presence of "true life". Through his love we receive the grace to persevere in hope. This hope is born from the encounter with the risen Christ, who is the



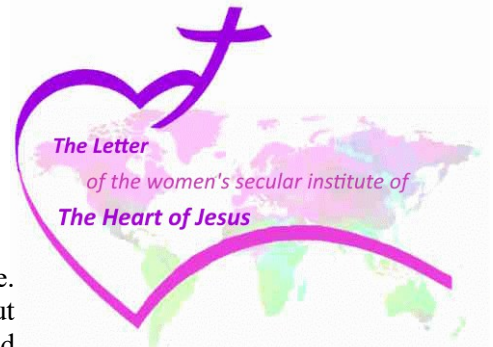
Bakhita, who overcame all the suffering of a life of slavery to find freedom in God, discovered that she was known and loved, and even more, awaited by God. "I am definitively

loved, and whatever happens to me, I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good." Through the knowledge of this hope, she was "redeemed," she no longer felt like a slave, but like a free daughter of God. (SS 3)



### Hope is performative.

The characteristic of hope is that it transforms our lives to the point that, through it, we are saved. We are saved by hope. Both faith and hope have their origin in Christ. This hope is certain because it is the objective presence of Jesus. The encounter with Christ shows us something of the "promised reality," and his presence is evidence of what is not yet seen. The witness of the



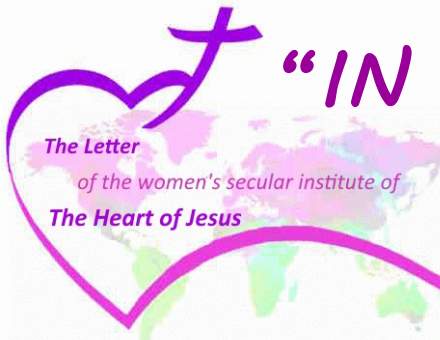
saints shows us something of the evidence of the hope we await. Salvation has already begun but is not yet complete; we are saved in hope and through hope. This hope gives us the strength to cling to the good even when there is no hope. "It is important to know this: I can always hope, even if apparently I have nothing left to hope for my life or for the historical moment I am living. Only the great hope and certainty that, despite all failures, my personal life and history as a whole are preserved in the indestructible power of Love and, thanks to it, have meaning and significance —only such hope can in this case still give me the courage to act and continue."(SS 35)



### Hope based on love

Human beings need unconditional love to be able to proclaim with certainty that "neither death nor life, nor angels nor demons, nor the present nor the future, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:38-39). When there is such absolute and certain love, humanity can truly hope and have the certainty of being redeemed. Through Jesus, we are secure with God — not a distant deity, but a God who became man: "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).





# "IN HOPE WE WERE SAVED"

The Letter  
of the women's secular institute of  
The Heart of Jesus

## Living Christian hope



**1/ Prayer is the school of hope**

**"A first essential place for learning hope is prayer. If no one listens to me**

**anymore, God still listens to me. If I can no longer speak to anyone, if I can no longer call on anyone — I can always speak to God. If there is no one left who can help me — where there is a need or an expectation that exceeds the human capacity to hope, He can help me. If I am relegated to extreme solitude...; he who prays is never totally alone."** (SS 32) Cardinal Thuan's prayer in prison is a living testimony to this. Prayer places us before God, a living God. Jesus showed us the face of God and taught us to pray with the Lord's Prayer. He taught his disciples to place themselves before God. Prayer becomes a personal encounter with God. When we pray, we are never alone, and this is also expressed in the liturgy. Then, we pray with the Church, and the Church teaches us how to pray.



**"Augustine [...] defines prayer as an exercise of desire. Man was created for a great reality — for**

*God himself, to be filled with Him. But his heart is too narrow for the great reality assigned to it. It must be broadened. "Thus, God, by making us wait, broadens desire; by making us desire, he broadens the soul; by broadening it, he increases its capacity to receive."* (SS 33)



**2/ Acting and suffering as places for learning**

It is easy to understand that action nourishes hope. For human action, when it is serious and worthy, is hope in motion. Since God chose to work with humanity, through action, we create the conditions of possibility so that God can come into the world. "Making our contribution so that the world may become a little brighter and a little more human and so that the doors may open to the future" (SS 35) opens us to hope.



Suffering in all its forms, however, challenges us. We strive to alleviate it and fight for justice but evil, imperfection and human finitude remain. Everyone is called to reduce suffering, not only by working to reverse evil, but also by giving meaning to their own suffering and offering it up as Christ did. He went to the very end of suffering and stands alongside those who suffer. By uniting action and endurance, hope is born even for those who are incapable of changing the world—the marginalized, the

powerless—who can still resist evil by associating themselves with Christ's redemptive sacrifice. Thus, endurance becomes active.



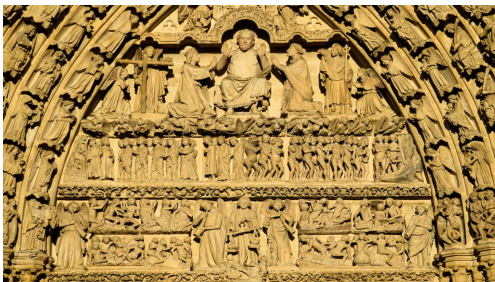
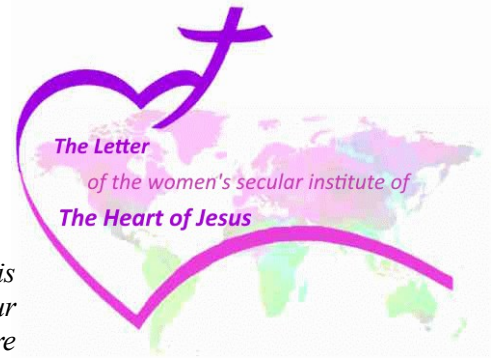
Only God could abolish evil and suffering: "only a God who personally enters history by becoming man and suffering there. We know that this God exists and therefore that this power that 'takes away the sin of the world' (Jn 1:29) is present in the world. Through faith in the existence of this power, the hope of the healing of the world has appeared in history." (SS 36)

*Hope is not an empty word, or a vague desire of ours that things may turn out for the best; hope is a certainty, because it is founded on God's fidelity to His promises. And this is why it is called a theological virtue: because it is infused by God and has God as its guarantor.*

Pope Francis - 2024



# "IN HOPE WE WERE SAVED"



## The judgment of Christ

The faith in Christ who will judge the living and the dead has existed since the first centuries of Christianity. But over time, men have become afraid of judgment. According to Christian hope, judgment is meeting with the one who is Hope and Love. Twentieth-century theology has refocused the "last ends" on eschatology. "Yes God exists and God knows how to create justice in a way that we are not capable to conceive and yet in faith we can anticipate. Yes, the resurrection of the flesh exists. Justice exists. The "revocation" of past suffering, and the reparation that restores the right exist. This is why faith in the Final Judgment is first and foremost hope. (SS 43) "The image of the Final Judgment is, first and foremost, not a terrifying image, but an image of hope; for us perhaps even the decisive image of hope. But is it not also an image of fear? I would say: it is an image that calls us to responsibility. An image, therefore, of that fear of which Saint Hilary says that each of our fears has its

place in love. God is justice and creates justice. This is our consolation and our hope. But in his justice there is also grace at the same time." (SS 44) "If someone has built a work that resists, he will receive a reward; if the whole work is burned, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, yet as through fire." (1 Cor 3:14-15). Thus, everything is centered on Christ.



## Models of hope

The encyclical cites numerous models of hope, as well as numerous testimonies of hope. Hope has a human face, Christ, and this face has found many followers throughout history, forming a "cloud of witnesses." The face of hope is revealed in the faces of hope, inviting us to look at Mary, presented as the "Star of Hope." Christian hope is also reflected in numerous saints, including Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Josephine Bakhita of Sudan, Cardinal Francis, and Saint Augustine. They encountered Christ and reflected his face of hope. They are figures who encountered the Face of Hope and became witnesses of hope. Christ is reflected in those who encounter him. It shows the personal nature of Christian hope.

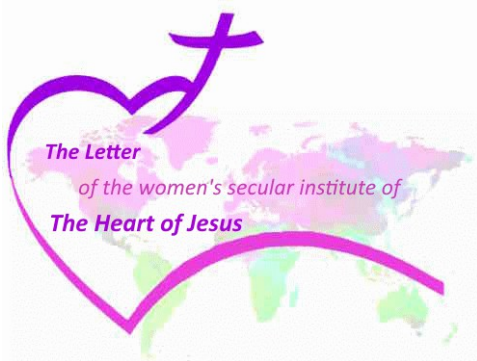


The encyclical invites Christians to experience salvation in hope through the encounter with Christ. Before Him, vain hopes do not satisfy our souls, as Saint Augustine exclaimed: "Our hearts are restless until they are satisfied: our hearts are restless until they rest in you." Thanks to hope, man is freed from the anxieties and paradoxes of life. The encounter with Christ transforms man into a witness of hope for his fellow men. In a world where the Church seems weak or losing momentum, she can only give what she has: Christ himself.

### Food for thought:

- What helps me remain hopeful?
- What hinders or prevents me from keeping hope alive?
- What links do I make between faith, charity and hope?
- What is my hope? How do I formulate it? Write it down if possible





# NEWS

For prayer to develop this power of purification, it must on the one hand be something very personal, an encounter between my intimate self and God, the living God. On the other hand it must be constantly guided and enlightened by the great prayers of the Church and of the saints, by liturgical prayer, in which the Lord teaches us again and again how to pray properly. Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, in his book of spiritual exercises, tells us that during his life there were long periods when he was unable to pray and that he would hold fast to the texts of the Church's prayer: the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the prayers of the liturgy. Praying must always involve this intermingling of public and personal prayer. This is how we can speak to God and how God speaks to us. In this way we undergo those purifications by which we become open to God and are prepared for the service of our fellow human beings. We become capable of the great hope, and thus we become ministers of hope for others. Hope in a Christian sense is always hope for others as well. It is an active hope, in which we struggle to prevent things moving towards the "perverse end". It is an active hope also in the sense that we keep the world open to God. Only in this way does it continue to be a truly human hope. (SS34)



The Cor Unum family from Hanoi-Ha Nam-Bac Ninh and Saigon met on February 2. On this occasion a PCJ and SVEs pronounced their commitments and entry into training.



Day of friendship and fraternity for vocations on March 2 in Benin

## Upcoming trip

- Thérèse Troi leaves for the United States in July. She will take part in the FCU retreat
- Agnès Trâm Anh and Marie to Madagascar in September

A meeting of our institute's regional and training leaders will take place in Vietnam from October 14 to 25, 2025.

Next Federal Council: March 3 to 5, 2026

