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Hopeful

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Hopeful

Hopeful persons are not necessarily full of hope, but they have an orientation towards life, and all that is life-giving. Most of us, if we stop to consider for a moment, are hopeful, no matter how often we are distressed by continual outpourings of "bad news" in the media. The opposite stance, that of leaning almost always towards the negative possibilities or outcomes, does not describe us, even if we share in the pain and suffering we note in the world around us. To be full of hope is likely more than we would use in an honest self-description, but "hopeful" probably befits most of us, most of the time.

Hopefulness is not a commodity that we can acquire. But neither is hopefulness primarily a function of consciously selected reasons that support our outlook. We become more hopeful through reflecting on our experiences, noting the difference between feared consequences on the one side, and actual outcomes on the other. We cannot convince ourselves by an act of the will alone that we should be hopeful, because our minds can so easily be filled with information about our friends' illnesses, another tragic accident, or more violent clashes between people of different races, religions, or living places. Rather, hope arises in us almost in spite of the sum of "bad news," through a spiritual awareness of our individual and communal participation in something better, greater, and truer than all that disturbs our minds and hearts.

Since hopefulness does not depend upon proofs, we grow in becoming more hopeful persons when we make use of the resources we have in our hearts and minds, looking beyond the immediate specific outcomes we have in mind. We might hope that a friend calls us to invite us out today, but hopefulness also allows for other possibilities which could be as various as receiving an invitation to go out, but for another time, or, not receiving a call, but trusting that we are appreciated and that our friend has another responsibility. We, and our well-being, do not depend upon having things work out exactly as we want, but on our openness to reality as we experience it, and in our intention to deal with it as best we can. We are hopeful because we are receptive to much more than a first thought of what the outcomes "should" be for any given situation.

Hopefulness is supported by our trust in God as good, and in creation as being an environment filled with gifts that are appropriate for us in fulfilling our purpose in life. If we consider how favored we are by God it becomes easy to become hopeful persons. When, for example, we have dependable friends and family members, hopefulness is much easier for us than if we see ourselves as pretty much alone in a world that might be aligned against

us. When we look inward, to where the Spirit of God is wholly enmeshed with our spirit, we can see, with the eyes of our hearts, the personal experiences of peace that reveal how God's love for us is utterly dependable, and how all of creation is aligned with us, not against us.

As an aid to our sense of hopefulness, consider the apparent failure of Jesus Christ, killed as a criminal, who is a total success: wholly alive and loving in our midst right now.

Happy Easter.