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2013

## Hope

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Roche, Fr. Randy, "Hope" (2013). *Spiritual Essays*. 310.  
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## Hope

I find hope to be a more elusive experience to describe than either faith or love, but I have no doubts about the increase of hope that I have noted among others lately, and certainly within myself.

While each of us recognizes our own experiences of hope usually after we reflect on particular persons and events around us, many of us have simultaneously been affected by some of the recent public actions of Pope Francis. I thought at first that my own sense of hopefulness might have arisen from my agreement with what he has done. But there is much more to the sense of hope than that I approve of some particular actions.

Hope is not about our will being done, of people agreeing with our thoughts and opinions, but upon a spiritual quality that is independent of any particular way of proceeding. My hope does not have its roots in that Pope Francis does or does not follow one or other custom that has been in use for many years, but that a fellow human knows his mind and heart well enough to put inner convictions into action from a perspective that is not bound or constrained either by "it has always been done this way" or by "this is the right way and what was done in the past was wrong."

One aspect of hope is recognizing that change is possible, encouraging us to act on our convictions without over-much attention to what went before, and at the same time without condemning or judging others' decisions. Hope does not depend upon liberal or conservative perspectives, but arises wherever we see human beings fully alive, responsive to the Spirit as well as to knowledge of what has gone before. We are reminded that the motives from which we act are primary, and the various manifestations of those motives are variable.

Hope is where we find it, a lived experience that does not require definition or explanation. Hope is an authentic movement of the Spirit which cannot be imposed upon us, but must be accepted if it is to have any effects within us. Hope leads us closer to fulfilling the purpose of our existence, closer to God.

Though some of us take hope in the example of others, as with Pope Francis, we have reason to more deeply engage hope at this time, as we consider the celebrations of Christ's Resurrection that take place all around the world. Here is a tradition of more than 2000 years that is as relevant now as it has always been, though the ways of remembering and celebrating vary through cultures and times. Our hope is always unique and personal, though we can offer greetings to one another and talk about the family, religious, and even secular customs, that accompany the annual feast day.

Hope will readily arise in our hearts if we take time to consider the meaning of Christ's rising from the dead by his power as God and his promise to all who trust in him, that "you will be like me as I am."

Celebrate the ultimate source of hope: Happy Easter.