

## 2010 Symposium Panel

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1. *At our monastic profession we pray to God: "do not disappoint me in my hope". Recall what **was** your hope as you prayed that at your profession? What is your hope as you pray that prayer now? How has God answered your prayer?*

At my First Profession, 44 years ago, we sang this prayer in Latin *Suscipe me Domine...* and this was for me the essential part of the prayer that means, if the Lord receives me, my life will have meaning and my life will not be in vain. It was a prayer more precisely of confidence than of hope, and an earnest petition to be faithful to the end. Prayer for perseverance was very common at that time.

Only later, after about 2 or three years of Juniorate, I realized that I also had expectations, human hopes regarding my work, study, mission assignment. This brought about a kind of crises. But I must say, the Lord solved this problem just as I had trusted in Him: He sent me to the mission in Brazil.

As I pray this prayer now, it is with confidence, based on the experience, that the Lord takes care and brings things to a good end. For me, hope now coincides with faith, as the letter to the Hebrews states: *Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. (11,1)* The things hoped for now are not anymore the kind of work, assignment, etc. but the things God promised to his people and to each person.

God has answered and is answering my prayer in a way that I will fully understand only when he finally receives me at the end of the journey. As all believers we make the experience that God apparently sometimes or often does not answer our prayer, but somehow it is a certainty of faith and hope in his love that sustains and keeps me on the road.

*2. Has there ever been a time in your life when you had little or no hope? How would you describe this time? What happened to bring a change for you?*

NO, I must say that for sure I passed through difficult times and of course there were doubts and insecurities regarding my own future, the future of my community. For sure faithful companions helped me, but I remember very well at the time of my final Profession, I imagined myself in all kinds of difficulties and asked myself how I would respond to them. My response was always based on the reflection that Jesus got through the difficulties because he was united to the FATHER. Up to now, I can say that I was never without hope. So far so good.

*3. Benedict does not have a chapter, or even a paragraph, expanding on his notion of hope, and yet the Rule certainly gives us a hope-filled way of life. In your living of the Rule what has helped you stay true to your monastic profession as a woman of hope?*

Benedict does not have a chapter or a paragraph on hope, but it seems to me that it is true to say the whole Rule is based on and inspires hope. Particularly two instruments in Chapter IV show this:

- Place your hope in God alone RB 4,41 and
- Finally, never lose hope in God's mercy RB 4,74

What helped me to stay true to my monastic profession?

In the first place it is not a WHAT but a WHO. Perseverance is God's grace. God's grace, however, has to find a way to the human heart. I am convinced, in monastic life this way is a normal ordinary way of prayer and work in community. The daily rhythm, the time for prayer and Lectio, the interaction with so many different characters were and are great helps. In every situation, especially in those where we might lose hope the words of Benedict are marvellous. We can always trust in God's love.

*4. What are or might be particular contributions that Benedictine women do or could make in nurturing hope in our world at this time?*

What is the hope in our world at this time? What do people hope for?

It surely depends on who the people are. For many there are fundamental needs they hope for, job, security, health, a good family. Others might hope for success, richness, prestige, etc. A common hope for most humans surely is: Peace, Justice and the preservation of Creation.

The contribution of Benedictine women to nurture hope is a very humble one, it is the testimony of perseverance with love in daily life, work and prayer, building community.

Monk Sossima in Dostoevski's novel *The Brothers Karamasov* says:

"In the face of the one or the other thought, you ask yourself: should it be tackled with force or with humble love? Always opt for humble love. If you made this option once and for all, you will conquer the whole world. Humble love is a tremendous force; it is the strongest force and there is nothing similar to it"

I believe that this is our contribution to nurture hope in our world.