

FROM THE DESK OF FR. DAVID

Today we will begin a series presenting the recent
Encyclical on Christian Hope by Pope Benedict
for your reading and meditation.

ENCYCLICAL LETTER: SPE SALVI

OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF BENEDICT XVI

TO THE BISHOPS, PRIESTS AND DEACONS, MEN AND WOMEN
RELIGIOUS AND ALL THE LAY FAITHFUL, ON CHRISTIAN HOPE

INTRODUCTION

1. “*SPE SALVI facti sumus*”—in hope we were saved, says Saint Paul to the Romans, and likewise to us ([Rom 8:24](#)). According to the Christian faith, “redemption”—salvation—is not simply a given. Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey. Now the question immediately arises: what sort of hope could ever justify the statement that, on the basis of that hope and simply because it exists, we are redeemed? And what sort of certainty is involved here?

FAITH IS HOPE

2. Before turning our attention to these timely questions, we must listen a little more closely to the Bible’s testimony on hope. “Hope”, in fact, is a key word in Biblical faith—so much so that in several passages the words “faith” and “hope” seem interchangeable. Thus the *Letter to the Hebrews* closely links the “fullness of faith” (10:22) to “the confession of our hope without wavering” (10:23). Likewise, when the *First Letter of Peter* exhorts Christians to be always ready to give an answer concerning the *logos*—the meaning and the reason—of their hope (cf. 3:15), “hope” is equivalent to “faith”. We see how decisively the self-understanding of the early Christians was shaped by their having received the gift of a trustworthy hope, when we compare the Christian life with life prior to faith, or with the situation of the followers of other religions. Paul reminds the Ephesians that before their encounter with Christ they were “without hope and without God in the world” (*Eph 2:12*). Of course he knew they had had gods, he knew they had had a religion, but their gods had proved questionable, and no hope emerged from their contradictory myths. Notwithstanding their gods, they were “without God” and consequently found themselves in a dark world, facing a dark future. *In nihil ab nihilo quam cito recidimus* (How quickly we fall back from nothing to nothing)^[1]: so says an epitaph of that period. In this phrase we see in no uncertain terms the point Paul was making. In the same vein he says to the Thessalonians: you must not “grieve as others do who have no hope” (*1 Th 4:13*). Here too we see as a distinguishing mark of Christians the fact that they have a future: it is not that they know the details of what awaits them, but they know in general terms that their life will not end in emptiness. Only when the future is certain as a positive reality does it become possible to live the present as well. So now we can say: Christianity was not only “good news”—the communication of a hitherto unknown content. In our language we would say: the Christian message was not only “informative”

but “performative”. That means: the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known—it is one that makes things happen and is life-changing. The dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life.

3. Yet at this point a question arises: in what does this hope consist which, as hope, is “redemption”? The essence of the answer is given in the phrase from the *Letter to the Ephesians* quoted above: the Ephesians, before their encounter with Christ, were without hope because they were “without God in the world”. To come to know God—the true God—means to receive hope. We who have always lived with the Christian concept of God, and have grown accustomed to it, have almost ceased to notice that we possess the hope that ensues from a real encounter with this God. The example of a saint of our time can to some degree help us understand what it means to have a real encounter with this God for the first time. I am thinking of the African Josephine Bakhita, canonized by Pope John Paul II. She was born around 1869—she herself did not know the precise date—in Darfur in Sudan. At the age of nine, she was kidnapped by slave-traders, beaten till she bled, and sold five times in the slave-markets of Sudan. Eventually she found herself working as a slave for the mother and the wife of a general, and there she was flogged every day till she bled; as a result of this she bore 144 scars throughout her life. Finally, in 1882, she was bought by an Italian merchant for the Italian consul Callisto Legnani, who returned to Italy as the Mahdists advanced. Here, after the terrifying “masters” who had owned her up to that point, Bakhita came to know a totally different kind of “master”—in Venetian dialect, which she was now learning, she used the name “*paron*” for the living God, the God of Jesus Christ. Up to that time she had known only masters who despised and maltreated her, or at best considered her a useful slave. Now, however, she heard that there is a “*paron*” above all masters, the Lord of all lords, and that this Lord is good, goodness in person. She came to know that this Lord even knew her, that he had created her—that he actually loved her. She too was loved, and by none other than the supreme “*Paron*”, before whom all other masters are themselves no more than lowly servants. She was known and loved and she was awaited. What is more, this master had himself accepted the destiny of being flogged and now he was waiting for her “at the Father’s right hand”. Now she had “hope” —no longer simply the modest hope of finding masters who would be less cruel, but the great hope: “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”, no longer a slave, but a free child of God. She understood what Paul meant when he reminded the Ephesians that previously they were without hope and without God in the world—without hope *because* without God. Hence, when she was about to be taken back to Sudan, Bakhita refused; she did not wish to be separated again from her “*Paron*”. On 9 January 1890, she was baptized and confirmed and received her first Holy Communion from the hands of the Patriarch of Venice. On 8 December 1896, in Verona, she took her vows in the Congregation of the Canossian Sisters and from that time onwards, besides her work in the sacristy and in the porter’s lodge at the convent, she made several journeys round Italy in order to promote the missions: the liberation that she had received through her encounter with the God of Jesus Christ,

she felt she had to extend, it had to be handed on to others, to the greatest possible number of people. The hope born in her which had "redeemed" her she could not keep to herself; this hope had to reach many, to reach everybody.



"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." - Mt 5:7-9

The Lenten Spring approaches...

Pre-Lenten Taize Prayer

Tuesday, 5 February 2008 @ 6:30pm
Saint Stanislaus Rectory

Ash Wednesday

The Eucharist

with the Blessing and Imposition of Ashes

Wednesday, 6 February 2008

8:00am Saint Stanislaus; 12 noon Saint John the Baptist;
6:00pm Saint Casimir

Lenten Regulations

Abstinence from meat is to be observed by all Catholics 14 years old and older on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent.

Fasting is to be observed on Ash Wednesday by all Catholics who are 18 years of age but not yet 59. *Fasting is understood as one full meal with smaller meals if needed for strength and no foods between meals.*

The Paschal Fast and abstinence are prescribed for Good Friday and encouraged through Holy Saturday until after the Easter Vigil.

DIACONAL CANDIDATES COMING...

Part of my priestly ministry is to teach a liturgical practicum to the diaconal candidates. As part of their training four candidates, **Joseph Brennan, Charles Valenti, Brian Levine** and **Brian Lewis** who are scheduled to be ordained this May, will minister and preach in the diaconal role at various times this winter-spring. Please welcome them and pray for them, their wives and families.

MINISTER TRAINING AND REFRESHER @ SAINT

JOHN'S A training session for new St. John's ministers; readers and Eucharistic ministers, will be held on Saturday, 9 February 2008; 2:30pm-Eucharistic Ministers, 3:30pm-Readers. Ministers from St. Casimir and St. Stan who wish a "refresher" are welcome.



We are pleased to announce and welcome the

WOULD U LIKE 2 DANCE?

Dance Studio

Chad Czelusniak, Instructor
Ballroom, Latin, Rhythm and Two-Step will be offered in the Dance Room on the 2nd Floor of St. Stanislaus Center for Learning and the Arts! Please call Linda at 842-2771 and sign up now!!

Readings for the Week of February 3, 2008

Sunday: Zep 2:3; 3:12-13/1 Cor 1:26-31/Mt 5:1-12a
Monday: 2 Sm 15:13-14, 30; 16:5-13/Mk 5:1-20
Tuesday: 2 Sm 18:9-10, 14b, 24-25a, 30-19:3/Mk 5:21-43
Wednesday: Jl 2:12-18/2 Cor 5:20-6:2/Mt 6:1-6, 16-18
Thursday: Dt 30:15-20/Lk 9:22-25
Friday: Is 58:1-9a/Mt 9:14-15
Saturday: Is 58:9b-14/Lk 5:27-32
Next Sunday: Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7/Rom 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19/Mt 4:1-11

NUNSENSE: Winner of the best off-Broadway musical will be presented at St. Joseph's Church in Broadalbin, NY. on Saturday, March 1, 2008 at 7:00 pm. Please see the bulletin board for more information.

SPECIAL COLLECTION: The annual *Black, Native American and Latin American Collection* will take place in our diocese next weekend, **FEBRUARY 9 – 10, 2008**. The purpose of this annual appeal is to assist dioceses unable to support missionaries in their ministry on behalf of Afro-American and Native American people in the mission areas in which such economic hardship and deprivation prevail. Please consider contributing to this special collection.

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST NEWS

Weekly Parish Stewardship Report

Budgeted Expenses for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008: **\$216,390.00**
The weekly collection needed to meet our expenses: **\$4,161.35**
prior to fundraising efforts.

Collection: 1/27/08: \$1,161.00

Weekly: \$1,061.00 Monthly: \$70.00
Candles: \$20.00 Misc.: \$10.00

USHERS: Please see Butch Zierak for an usher schedule if you have not yet received one. **THIS WEEK TEAM #2 COLLECTS**

"SOUPER BOWL" SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2008: We have a soup pot in the back of the church this weekend to collect donations for those in need. Donations will be given to the local food pantry. (We will also accept cans of soup.)

2007 Tax Statements: Statements of contributions to St. John's Church for 2007 are available in the back of the Church, in alphabetical order.

ALTAR SERVER TRAINING/PRACTICE: On Saturday, February 16, 2008 from 9:00 to 11:00 am there will be an altar server practice at St. John's Church for servers from both St. Casimir and St. John's Churches. Everyone is welcome.

ST. JOHN'S LADIES ROSARY SOCIETY: The Rosary Society will hold a meeting next Sunday, February 10, 2008 at 1:00 pm in the church hall. All members are invited to attend.



to **Marie Gavry**, first prize winner of the Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce

photo contest!

PIEROGI WORKERS: Pierogi making for the Lenten Buffet will take place on Friday, February 29th. Beginning on Monday, March 3rd, we will begin making pierogi for Easter. NOTE: Please see the bulletin board for events and programs being held at the Dominican Retreat & Conference Center in Niskayuna during the month of February. Many programs require reservations.

We will be distributing the schedule for **"USHERS"** today. This schedule will begin next Sunday and run through the end of 2008.

SAINT CASIMIR NEWS

Weekly Parish Stewardship Report

Budgeted Expenses for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008:
\$188,494.02

The weekly collection needed to meet our expenses: **\$3,624.89** prior to fundraising efforts.

1/27//08 Collection: \$1,458.00

Weekly: \$1,180.00 Monthly: \$52.00
All Saints: \$3.00 Solemnity of Mary: \$16.00
Fuel: \$40.00 Immac. Concept.: \$2.00
Evangelist: \$80.00 Candles: \$68.00

****Initial Offering-\$17.00**

(**Please use this envelope as it helps to defray some of the mailing costs to the Parish)

Also please use the envelope in your packet for the Evangelist.

The monthly Collection for the Catholic Charities Food Pantry is taking place this morning. Please be generous. Thank you!

500 Club Winner-January 23, 2008-Kathy Dillion #221

Football Pool Info: Today is the Super Bowl!!!

We will announce the winner of this poll in next week's bulletin. GOOD LUCK!!!

The Faith Formation students will be participating in today's Liturgy.

****TODAY** - SUPER BOWL SUNDAY -CHILI BOWL!!**

Please attend our 3rd Annual **Chili Bowl** today **at 11:30 am (immediately following the 10:30 am. Mass) to 1:30 pm in the Social Center.** The price is \$4.00 per serving and includes Delicious Chili (made by our fine St. Casimir's Chefs) Fresh Italian Bread and Chips. We are also featuring a bake sale. Please help to make this annual fundraiser a success.

ALTAR SERVERS: Practice will take place on Saturday, February 16th from 9-11:00am. at The Church of St. John the Baptist. Anyone wishing to serve in this ministry is welcome to attend.

POST SUPER BOWL "SOUP"ER BOWL COLLECTION: NEXT SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10.

Please bring a can of soup or a monetary donation to share with those in need in our community.

A "soup pot" will be placed in the back of the Church for your contributions. All donations will be give to Catholic Charities. Thank you

THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF MARTYRS:

Please see the flyers on the bulletin board for the taking place in February and March

A FAMILY PERSPECTIVE BY BUD OZAR:

It is in our family where we learn to be merciful and comforting to others. The Beatitudes of the Kingdom of God begin in at home and depend on you.

MARRIAGE MOMENTS: Lent is about to begin. Instead of "giving up" something today, consider "giving in." Is there some way you could yield to your spouse this Lent? Just don't pick the same thing lest it become the cyclical "Whatever YOU want, Whatever YOU want..."

SAINT STANISLAUS NEWS

WEEKLY PARISH STEWARDSHIP REPORT

Budgeted Expenses for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008: **\$400,627.04**
The weekly collection needed to meet our expenses: **\$7,704.37** prior to fundraising efforts.

01/27/08 Collection: \$5,108.00

Weekly: \$3,384.00 Monthly: \$37.00
Fuel & Utilities: \$90.00 Liability Ins.: \$1,111.00
Capital Improvement: \$267.00 Evangelist: \$165.00

****Initial Offering:** \$54.00 (to date \$900.00)

****Initial Offering** donations are used to defray the cost of mailing Sunday offering envelope packets to our parishioners. There is a \$5.00 "suggested offering". If you are able to give \$5.00 or more, it would be greatly appreciated.. \$5.00 for each set of envelopes mailed out comes to \$2,055.00. **Total mailing cost for the year 2007 was approximately \$2,461.08**, Address/name changes, etc. must be submitted to the rectory by the first of each month. Thank you for your continued generosity.

"**THE HOLY NAME SOCIETY** will hold its February meeting in the Church Hall on Sunday, February 10 following the 8:30 AM Mass"

LADIES' ROSARY SOCIETY MEETING - Sunday, February 10 at 2 p.m. in the church hall.

POUNDS FOR CASH

see who can shed the most pounds and "bring home the bacon!"

Deacon Michael Ryba

challenges

Rev. David Wm. Michkiewicz

???Who can lose more weight, a priest or a deacon???

Weigh-In: 6 February 2008 (Ash Wednesday)
D-Day: 11 May 2008 (Pentecost Sunday)

How much will you pledge per pound lost?

CHOOSE whether your pledge will apply to "the priest," "the deacon," or "both" and

SEND along with your name, address, phone #, and pledge *per pound lost*

TO EITHER:

E-mail: sscrectory@att.net (subject: Pounds for Cash) or
Post: **Pounds for Cash**, St. Stanislaus, 73 Reid Street, Amsterdam, NY 12010

Or just drop an envelope marked Pounds for Cash in the collection basket!

To Benefit Saint Stanislaus Church
96 days! Can they do it? **BE THERE!**



to Ashley Werner and the members of her Odyssey of the Mind Team, Aaron White, Heather Phelps, Molly Biggers and Zach Hatcher, as they participate in the local Spontaneous Problem Solving Day in Broadalbin on Saturday, February 9th! They will compete against other area teams, including Mayfield, Johnstown, Gloversville and their own Broadalbin-Perth! On Saturday, March 8th, the team travels to Ilion to participate in the Regional competition against many other New York State teams!
We wish you well!

CONGRATULATIONS

To

Ryan Walega

Recently named to the President's List for the Fall 2007 semester at Hudson Valley Community College with a GPA of 3.8! Ryan is majoring in Criminal Justice.



MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4

Alex Rzasa, req. Officers & Directors of St. Michael's Society

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

Laura Mazur, req. Lottie & Norbert Fryc

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6



8:00am Saint Stanislaus; 12 noon Saint John the Baptist;
6:00pm Saint Casimir

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7

William & Dorothea Ostrowski, req. Regina

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Eleanor Niemczyk, req. Mary

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9 (4:30 @ St. John's)

John Bien, req. Wife

Joan Crouse, req. Charles & Emily Curcurito

Dorothy Traskas, req. Clara Krupa

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10-8:30 @ St. Stan's/10:30 @ St. Casimir

8:30am **Fr. Clement A. Wozniak** (Ann.), req. Nephew & Niece Edward & Christine Andrzejewski

Stanley Posluszny, req. Betty, John, Chris & Kathy Tybor

Freda Ochal, req. Regina Draus & Helen Bishop

John Posluszny, req. Ron & Sophie

10:30am **For Parishioners**



Operation Rice Bowl

In just a few days, your Lenten journey will begin. Catholic Relief Services invites you to make this journey in solidarity with your global family, and Operation Rice Bowl makes this easy and enriching. To be Catholic means to be linked not just to our local communities, but also to our global community. Last year, the \$8 million offered by participants in Operation Rice Bowl made a huge difference to people all around the world. Together, we can induce tremendous change: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied."