

A.M.D.G.

Reflection of Consciousness / Examen on Hope

by Elisabeth Clarke

'Hope lies in dreams, in imagination, and in the courage of those who dare to make dreams into reality.' – Jonas Salk

With the most current announcement of the extension of our restrictions, many now feel weary and worn out. Some find themselves in a dark place. Yet, darkness or negativity does not have to be our truth. As human beings we are automatically drawn to light. Even if you find yourself in the darkest of rooms, as soon as light sneaks in through a tiny crack, it will get your attention. Faith, love and hope are among the core values and virtues in Christianity. Countless times in human experience have we seen that the energy of hope can overcome fear and anxiety.

This series of reflections starts with an Examen on gratitude. Why? Because gratitude is the foundation to love and hope. We find the greatest hope, and therefore encouragement, in the space of gratitude. The process is a simple one, the more grateful I am, the more hopeful I become, because the more I praise and celebrate life, the more there IS to celebrate and to praise!

Hope is not a passive act: every morning I have the choice to experience curiosity over cynicism, put aside despair and find something positive in every day. Through the choice of our actions hope becomes a verb, a way of proceeding that shapes our lives every day.

Now allow yourself to become still, in mind and in movement. Turn down the volume on random thoughts and preoccupations. Allow yourself to just BE. Become aware of your breathing. Feel your in-breath. Feel your out-breath. Let your breath flow.

We begin by asking
*God,
let me be still
and at peace,
just for a few moments,
in the busy-ness
of this past week.
Let me be attentive
to where I have been
and where I am headed.
And let me see where
you have been present
in my life this past week.
Amen.*

Now open your mind and your heart to this Examen asking God to reveal, in any special way, ALL the blessings of your life – the real big ones and the small ones, too. Silently ask, *'What has filled me with joy and gratitude?'* Allow all those blessings to appear randomly and name them: *'Thank you for the gift of ... and thank you also for the gift of ...'* And repeat this a few times allowing the gratitude to sink in.

Next allow the experiences of this week to float by in a random order.
Ask yourself, *which of these experiences has given me hope?*
A person/place/event/thing most likely will pop up quickly.
Whatever has appeared for you, place it before your mind's eye. Observe it carefully: *How did it make me feel?*
Whatever hope you focus on, stay with it in prayerful imagination, allowing all feelings to dwell up.

Next, talk to God about the things, people and moments about which you feel bad. Say, *'forgive me God for ...'* and just let yourself go. Listen carefully to what you find your heart and soul saying at this moment.

Finally, ask *'What are my hopes for the future?'*
Allow yourself to daydream about these hopes.
What would it feel like to have it in my life at all times?
Now repeat the name of this hope (dream) over and over again.
Ask for support to become the person you need to be to make this hope (dream) a reality.

To close this Examen practice we pray:
May hope remain a steady and guiding force to us all.
May hope connect each of us to the Source, to God,
And may our hope become a light to follow for others.
Amen.