



ordinary
time



lectionary
reading

Cycle A

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary 34

Reading I: Zechariah 9: 9-10

The prophet Zechariah is a prophet of **hope**. In this particular section of the Book of the prophet Zechariah, we encounter a time when the nation of Israel is coming to the end of its exile. **Hopes** are high that the kingdom will be restored to the greatness it had achieved under the the reign of King David. There is **hope** for peace which is symbolized by the prophecy that the king to come will be riding, not a horse, which is symbolic of a king at war, but on the foal of an ass representing one coming in peace.

Reading 2: Romans 8:9, 11 - 13

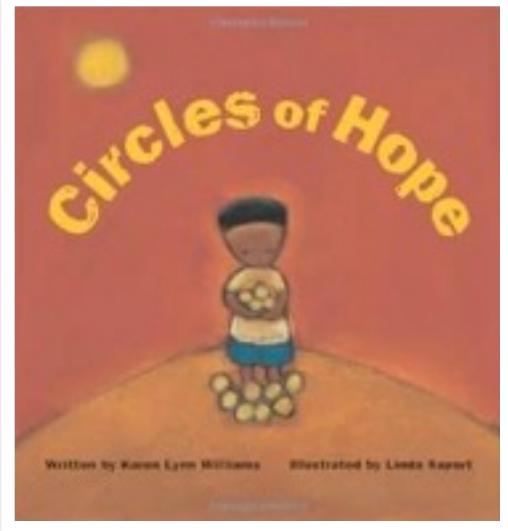
Saint Paul is masterful at drawing contrasts, and in this instance he describes the dichotomy between *flesh* and *spirit*. In Saint Paul's worldview, flesh and spirit don't distinguish the physical body from the soul. Instead, flesh refers to the human person in their entirety--body and soul, but in an unredeemed state. He states emphatically that we have **hope** in the belief that as we are able to live freely because of access to the grace and salvation won for us by Christ. The entire chapter actually views all from the perspective of the present with **hope** for the future.

Gospel: Matthew 11: 25-30

Jesus, concerned about those who do not believe, praises God for giving the childlike what is beyond the grasp of the so-called wise of the world. In the context of this passage, Jesus' words refer to the oppressive and legalistic system imposed upon the people by the scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus wishes to release the people of these oppressions and offer them **hope**. It must be understood that when Jesus speaks of his *yoke* he does not offer license in place of the Law, but rather, he offers obedience to his teaching and to the deeper law of love. His burden is easy and his yoke is light precisely because they lead to truth and love and are infinitely lighter than those we impose on ourselves when we turn away from love and enter into sin. The Lord extends **hope to us** in all instances.



children's
story



Circles of Hope

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character
education
activity

**Hope is the virtue that
compels us to go forward and
remain committed to
goodness in our life and in our
world.**

Circles of Hope

In *Circles of Hope*, the author tells the story of a family's great excitement as they welcome a new baby into the world. Everyone has a gift for the new baby, Lucia, except her brother, Facile. With their father away in the big city there is no one to plant a tree for the newly born Lucia. Traditionally a fruit tree is planted when a child is born into the mountainous villages of Haiti, and the tree grows up to be a guardian of the child. With no one to plant Lucia's tree, Facile realizes the planting will be his responsibility. Facile plants a mango seed in the ground and waters and nurtures it and waits for it to sprout, only to find that the sprout was eaten by a goat. As the story progresses, he makes two more attempts to plant a tree for his sister and each time the seed and his **hope** for a gift for his sister are lost. Ultimately Facile is determined that there will be a tree for his sister and with unquenched **hope** he pursues in bring about a the growth of a tree. It is **hope** that spurs him on even after several failures.

Activity

Step One: Purchase seeds of a tree that would flourish in the climate where you are located. After researching the type of soil and amount of water and sun necessary for the growth of the particular seed, provide the students with containers, soil and the seed of that particular tree.

Step Two: In groups of three or four, have the students plant a seed and take turns watering and caring for the seed until it sprouts. Once it has taken hold and grows stronger, find a protected area on the school property to transfer the seedling outdoors. Take steps to ensure the safety of the seedling such as encircling it with fencing to protect it from being eaten (probably not by a goat but by any other critters). If there is not enough space for the trees, investigate to see if there is a community in need of the trees.

Step Three: Dedicate the grove of trees to **HOPE** for the world.

Hope, along with faith and love is a virtue that will guide us in a life dedicated to goodness.



case study

Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.

What could you do today?

Listen to the news one evening with your parents by your side and make note of some of the news reports that would lead someone to feel hopeless about their situation. With the help of your parents make a list of the various news reports that you would like to include in your prayers for that evening as you get ready for bed. Remember that there are many stories in the Bible and in history where things looked hopeless and yet there were people that allowed God to work through them to alleviate desperate situations. One of the actions that all of us can become involved in is praying for those who are caught in difficult situations. You may wish to make it a practice to pray that those who are faced with adversity may hold fast to their faith and **hope** in God. One day you may be in a position to do something in addition to praying for **hope**. Pray that you may be an instrument of God by bringing **hope** to a people in need.

Look Feel Know Act

Hope is something that is essential to having fulfilling life. It is important to recognize that we are all in this journey of life together and as we travel along we will each have our moments of strength and our moments of weakness. Recall moments that you felt very strong and how you were able to assist someone who was weaker than you in a given situation. Also recall a time when you seemed to not have the strength in the midst of some difficulty and how another person, through their strength, brought you **hope**. Recognizing these cycles of strength and weakness, **hope** and despair will assist us in being open to receiving help and support when we need it and likewise able to give **hope** and support for others in need. In the gospels we see Jesus sending out his disciples in twos, so that one might be strong when the other is weak and vice versa. Living as a people of **hope** sends a strong message to a world that is in need of support and encouragement.

In *Circles of Hope*, we are invited to travel alongside a young boy who has his **hopes** dashed on more than one occasion as he attempt to plant a mango tree to honor the birth of his sister. Even in the midst of failure the young boy holds onto his **hope** that he might bring about this age old tradition of his culture. Through the power of **hope** the planting and successful growth of the tree becomes a reality. Throughout the scripture readings, not only those chosen by the Church for today's Eucharistic celebration, but in many instances, words of **hope** are held forth for us. The Psalms would be one example of the words of the Bible that speak of **hope** in the midst of adversity.



closing
tool

Pray Psalm 3: 3-6 as a prayer of
HOPE

*But you, O Lord, are a shield
around me,*

*my glory, and the one who
lifts up my head.*

*I cry aloud to the Lord, and He
answers me.*

I lie down and sleep;

*I awake again, for the Lord
sustains me.*

*I am not afraid of ten thousands of
people who have set themselves
against me all around. Amen.*



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