

## HOPE

*The most beautiful of all creation is that which is made in God's image, that is, each one of us.*

*Pope Leo X1v*

Many years ago, I read a book about Saint John of the Cross. I was inspired by it. Saint John was a good friend and colleague of Saint Teresa of Avila, a writer and a poet. Perhaps, his best-known work was "The dark night of the soul". At that time, I was having some difficulty with my own faith. I was not doubting God but myself. The overwhelming feelings of love and joy that I had experienced when I first became an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion seemed to have left me and I wondered if I was losing my faith. I did not think it was as serious as a dark night of the soul, but it troubled me. I spoke about it to my priest and he gave me some reassurance. During this Year of Hope, I have been re-examining my faith again and asking myself, what am I hoping for? Because of my age and my physical condition, I can no longer safely commit to the ministries I so loved being involved in.

These last few months have been difficult. So many bereavements of family and friends have made me realise how few years I may have left in this life. I am not afraid of dying, I am more concerned for those I leave bereaved. I think about our broken world and our young ones and how will they cope with what we leave them. Again, I know it is not a dark night of the soul for I know that I am not as saintly as Saint John. He was a very holy person. I pray each day for holiness but I realise how small and insignificant I am. I acknowledge every day how much Jesus has given to me and done for me and how little I have to give back to him; I am so weak, so timid and sinful, but I pray for the courage and the strength to overcome my failings. It was then that I read the above quote by Pope Leo and I realised that it does not matter how small and insignificant I am, I am a part of God's creation. One of my favourite saints is Saint John Henry Newman. He writes-

*God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission – I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I have a part in this great work. He has not created me for naught. I shall do his work.*

God made me for a special reason, for a mission that only I can fulfil. I do not know what that mission is and perhaps will not ever know in this life but I can hope and pray that when I am called to the next life I will have fulfilled that mission.

This is a Jubilee year of Hope. I recently began a 28-day pilgrimage of hope with the help from a CTS book I received in the post called "Dare to Hope" by Father James McTavish FMVD. It is a series of daily reflections. From them, I have learned how negative and offensive to Faith, Hope and Love are these feelings of sadness, anxiety and discouragement. They lead only to despair and hopelessness. I have also an anchor in Heaven, but He is not only in Heaven, He is with me at all times. He is there in the tabernacle when I go to church for Morning Prayer and when I receive Him in Holy Communion, He remains with me throughout the day. I have only to turn to him and ask his help.

*This is our Christian hope; The light of Jesus, the salvation that Jesus brings to us with his light that saves us from the darkness.* Pope Francis