

Thoughts:

Isn't it always IN THE CHAOS that hope finds a way into our broken hearts? We would never even notice LIGHT slowly dawning on us and giving us a reason to hope, if we did not feel lost in darkness and confusion. Surely this entire year we've just said goodbye to, and the most recent weeks in our nation have given us stronger reasons to be anxious, bewildered, doubtful and very very sad. So many songs have been written about just this state of mind: songs about hitting rock bottom and realizing the only way out is UP!! "a dead end street is just a place to turn around..."

Surely pandemic fear and restrictions, loss of loved ones, isolation, seeing the images of our nation's Capitol assaulted are enough to send us to the rock hard bottom of our hearts. But in that same rock hard bottom is a faint melody, an almost silent echo of something we know is TRUE...something we have been taught by our parents, teachers, mentors, and many of us by the Sisters of the Assumption. And that melody, that echo says this: HOPE springs eternal...it FINDS a way into our discouraged hearts. It's in listening to each other's stories that this melody gets confirmed over and over until we believe it so strongly that it becomes our "default setting!!" ["someone's normal behaviour and reactions"] In this coming Sunday's gospel, the bewildered apostles ask Jesus, "where are you staying?"...indeed, we might ask Jesus the same question..."where are you staying?...where ARE you?"

Do we know the answer already in our heart of hearts? Jesus says, "come and see..." "I'm right where I always am....nearer to you than your own breath..." THIS IS WHY YOU AND I CAN STILL HAVE HOPE!!!

St Peter proclaims in his first letter, chapter 3, verse 15, "Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you about the hope you

have. Be ready to give the reason for it. But do it gently and with respect.”

What’s the reason for our hope??? Experience!!! God has never abandoned us....why would God do so now? Do we believe that we are living in the worst of times??? Our media would have us believe that: these are unprecedented times we hear about 20 times a day! But even a brief look back into history tells us otherwise. We’ve been here before...Sr Adrienne congratulates us on our resilience and our compassionate faith. She is well aware of American history and human history...”we’ve done it before....we’ll do it again!!!”

It is our faith that gives birth to our resilience. It is our faith in a provident God that makes us believe once again that hope WILL find a way...that LIGHT WILL penetrate our darkness. But Sr Adrienne, as one of our Congregational leaders, says something else as she ends her message to us and it is something extremely important!!

“May this coming year **open good passages** of comfort and peace...” *love this image of opening up the passages....*I have had a lifelong battle with sinus passages and know firsthand the relief of easier breathing when those passages are opened!! Let’s commit ourselves to praying and meditating these next few weeks of January using this strong image of opening up the passages to let in hope and light and resilience. It starts with US and it starts WITHIN!!

As Mary Ellen Abodeely shared on the Salem zoom session I attended last Saturday, we can do just that by simply having “smiling eyes above our masks!!” Let hope flow through....let light shine through....and 2021 will be the better year we are all wishing for each other.