

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Hope in a Good Sense The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God Tuesday, January 1, 2019 Nm 6:22-27; Gal 4:4-7; Lk 2:16-21
(We have never been before where God is leading us. It's on a wonderful journey.)

Your experience may be very different from mine, but in my experience of celebrating New Year's Eve I have never heard people around me say what a wonderful year this was; I hope next year is just as good as this year. I have never heard that. The people I celebrate New Year's Eve with are basically pretty prosperous people. I never hear that. **What I hear every year is "Good riddance to this year; I hope next year is better."**

Well let's examine that hope, or that use of the word "hope." Perhaps that's not real hope. There is something about human beings that we tend to be optimistic, and I have to say thank God, because if we didn't have optimism in us, what would happen? But **optimism is a rather generic thing. It may or may not be well-grounded.** If we think about 2019 in terms of economics, politics, world affairs, government, personal life, family life, **is there any reason to suspect that in some natural way it will be better than last year?** I would say no, there's no plausible reason to say next year will be better than this year.

But when we realize that we didn't simply evolve out of nothing, that we are creatures of an intelligent God, a wise God, a good God, who gifted us with himself, who has come to join in our lives to lead us onward to something we can't quite imagine, in fact St. Paul says, "No mind has ever imagined, no eye have ever seen, no ear has ever heard **what God is leading us toward,**" well then, yes, **from that viewpoint something better can happen.** But that requires something. **That requires that we actually listen to what God is saying, that we actually pay attention to where God is leading us.** And that requires **that we give up any sort of self-complacency, any sort of self-sufficiency.** Self-complacency and self-sufficiency are really poisons that infect us.

No, **we are living in a broken world.** Our society is broken. Our families are broken and dysfunctional, I would say almost universally. **But God is with us and God is with us to heal us and to take us somewhere, but we have be willing to go.** And we won't be willing to go, we **won't be willing to listen, as long as we think we know better.** And that is a terrible human fault, and I suppose we all fall into it the older we get, I think. We know better. We have been here before. Well, no, **we have never been before where God is leading us. It's on a wonderful journey.**

Now **Our Blessed Mother**, whose feast we celebrate today, her motherhood actually, she **was a wonderful example of what it means to trust in the guidance of God on a journey to wherever.** She didn't know where she was going, but **she let God lead. Through her openness God did wonderful things in Christ. That can be repeated an infinite number of times in every single life. And that is hope in a good sense,** because it's resting on, not the probability that things will just get better, but they are **resting on God's own promises.**