

one

What it means to hope for others

Hope is the virtue in which we realize that our only true happiness is to be found in Heaven. And so, naturally, hope prompts us to pursue Heaven as the only thing that can ultimately satisfy us.

Now when you love someone else, it means you think of them as another self, so what makes them happy makes you happy. In other words, love makes you long for the happiness of another as you long for your own.

So, if we have hope, and if we love our neighbor, we'll not only commit ourselves to pursuing heaven for ourselves but we'll be dedicated to doing what we can to help our friends, our kids, our families, and even our enemies get there too.

That's what happens when you combine hope and love.

two

Danger of despairing for others

We discussed in an earlier meditation the danger of being presumptuous about other people's salvation, the danger of just assuming they'll be okay instead of intentionally working for their salvation while they're alive and praying for them after they've died. But there's also the danger of despairing for others, of writing people off and giving up on them.

So many parents, after a while, just lose the hope, the energy, to keep praying for their kids, sacrificing for their kids, asking God to have mercy on their kids.

The virtue of hope doesn't let us quit working towards our own salvation. And it doesn't let us quit working for the salvation of those we love.

three

Practically, what should we do when our kids, family or friends are not interested in Jesus or religion?

Let me suggest eight practical things to do to help our loved ones into heaven.

First, you and I must commit ourselves to our own ongoing conversion and growth in holiness.

Saints converted people because they were holy. What might be preventing the conversion of our loved ones is our own poor example. We must deepen our own conversion. I mean working hard at daily meditation and a daily resolution and examination of conscience. Receive the Eucharist as often as possible and go to confession at least once a month.

This is the only way we will, with the help of God's grace, overcome our vices and become virtuous.

Virtuous people like John Paul II and Mother Teresa inspired love of God and holiness in others. We want to be like that.

Second, offer all of your prayer, Rosaries, and Masses for your loved ones.

Then, third, offer sacrifice for their conversion. Prayer without sacrifice is weak. Offer your prayer, work, joy and suffering for your loved ones. Begin each day with the morning offering and renew it throughout the day by accepting and offering what you did not choose, do not like and cannot change.

Jesus said to St. Faustyna

"My daughter, I want to instruct you on how you are to rescue souls through sacrifice and prayer. You will save more souls through prayer and suffering than will a missionary through his teachings and sermons alone." Diary 1767

four

Here is what we must do next to help our loved ones to Heaven

Fourth, give your loved ones entirely to Mary. She knows what they need. She can work things out when you can't.

Then give yourself entirely to Mary. Belong entirely to Her and let her lead you. See, I tend to confront the situation, attack it, when I should wait but I wait when I should confront it. Belong to Mary and let Our Lady of Good Counsel lead you.

Fifth, make every effort to deepen your relationship with the person you hope to help. Get to know and understand them better. Delight in their good and care for them unconditionally.

Sixth, have you asked them why they are not interested in God or the practice of the faith? We assume things that are not true. Ask without judgment or without allowing your emotions to take control. You will learn much.

Seventh, have patience. Getting to Heaven is a life-long process for all of us. Have a long-term strategy for your loved ones. Think how long and how far we have come on our journey. Think how patient God has been with us. Do the same for them.

five

The eighth thing we must do to help our loved ones to Heaven is invite

As we belong to Mary and allow her to lead us, when she prompts us we must invite our loved one to some encounter with Jesus. Invite them to prayer, teach them how to pray, invite them to confession and be willing to accompany them, invite them to Mass or to learn more about God and Catholicism. But at some point we must invite!

And here's a bonus - remember - God's in control, and He loves the people we love more than we do.

You might say, "No, but you don't understand, did you hear the kind of life my son or daughter is living or how my cousin or my uncle passed away? It was awful. I don't know how to hope for their soul after that."

Fair enough, but that doesn't change the two fundamental facts: God is in control and God loves your loved one more than you could ever imagine. Remember, He let Himself be tortured to death for their salvation. He's *deeply* invested in their salvation. If God permits people to make bad choices or die in tragic or disturbing ways, it's presumably because He knows something we don't.

Again, that doesn't mean we should be presumptuous about their salvation, we should still pray and sacrifice for their souls. But when you know that nothing happens without God's permission, and that everyone's salvation is His top priority...well, that should be a source of profound reassurance. That should give us a renewed resolution to hope.