

Hope at Work at Work

Hope is more accurately a virtue than a value. Specifically the Church teaches that it is a theological virtue, that is, a gift from God just as Faith and Charity are virtues and gifts from God. It is “the confident expectation of divine blessing and the beatific vision” (Catechism of the Catholic Church §2090). “It is a firmly established attitude of the heart, a basic bearing of the whole person” (David Steindl-Rast). It is both desire for divine blessings and the confident expectation that one will receive them.

If hope is a virtue like Faith, how can it be a faith-based value? In one sense, it cannot; both are theological virtues, gifts from God. Values are those attitudes or modes of acting that I deem important, that I give some priority to. Faith-based values are those attitudes or modes of acting that my Faith nudges me to deem valuable. They are priorities based on my Faith that there is a God who has redeemed me for life everlasting with him. My faith leads me to give value, to give priority to my expectation of divine blessing and the beatific vision.

If I give value to hope, I give priority to the virtue of hope. To me this means I have the expectant desire to be loved by God both now and into eternity. I place this expectation before other things that I might want in determining what I will do. In the midst of work, I have many opportunities to make choices about my attitude and my actions. What is it that guides my choices?

I may have faith, that is, I believe in God, life everlasting, and so forth. But do I have hope, that is, do I expect to live on into eternity with the loving God? If I do not, I may very likely choose my attitudes and actions based on my own immediate desires, wants, comfort, etc. If I have hope and if I prize it, I choose that which takes me closer to the expectantly desired end, life everlasting in the presence of God.

A friend of mine retired a number of years ago after a 42 year career in social services. He and his wife expected that he would teach for a while at the local university and they would take trips to various places that interested them around the world. Less than six months into his retirement, he was presented with the request to lead a local Catholic social service agency. With his wife’s support, the couple selflessly chose to give service to others, giving up their personal goals of teaching and travel. I believe their choice was an example of the meaning behind the Catechism’s statement, “Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity” (§ 1818).

In trying times, when concerns for continued employment appear on all sides, persons who value hope do not ignore such pressing problems. Rather, they view and address them from the perspective that they are but temporary troubles in light of their awareness of God’s ever present and eternal love. Perhaps the attitude they take is best captured by the scripture phrase, “Do not be afraid” and in Helen Steiner Rice’s poem [This too Shall Pass](#).

In a much smaller way, I see people valuing hope in their workplaces when they choose to respect the customer or client even as the customer is haranguing them for a consideration that cannot be given. I see hope being valued when a person’s attitude is to be generous with time, energy, knowledge, and expertise to those with whom they interact at any given moment in the day. As Pope Benedict XVI has written, they are participating in the justice and generosity of God towards others.

Hope encourages the search for the greater purpose of life. A person with hope lives differently. Again, according to Pope Benedict XVI, “As we become capable of great hope we become ministers of hope to others.” Poised between the present and a not yet but expectantly desired future with God, we act toward that expected eternal, future life.

HOPE — A Faith Based Value at Work

- 1. What does applying the faith-based value of hope in your workplace mean to you? What do you think it would mean to those with whom you work? How does its meaning change for your different workplaces, for example, home or where you volunteer?**
- 2. Why is it important to gain an understanding of hope in the workplace and how to apply that understanding?**
- 3. How do/could you apply the concept of hope in your workplace(s)?**
- 4. What would happen in your workplace if you took and actively applied the value of faith-based hope in your workplace(s)? How would the workplace sound different? Look different? Feel different?**
- 5. What first step are you willing to take this week?**