

Fr. Ignatius John Schweitzer, OP : “Hope Obtains as Much as it Hopes for,’ Only as a Beggar with Perpetual Empty Hands”

“Hope obtains as much as it hopes for.” This line captures the bold hope of St. Therese but it clearly has to be understood in the proper way since we know by experience that we do not obtain every single thing we hope for. This talk will explore how to properly understand a Theresian hope as humble boldness and how to live it out. Little bold Therese takes this poignant line from St. John of the Cross, who links hope with poverty of spirit and non-possession. She similarly says at the end of life she will appear before the Lord with empty hands having only a hope in God. This points to the simultaneous lofty and poor status of hope. Lofty hope being also a poor beggar means it is not a stranger to and indeed thrives in the very dark night of faith.

Indeed there is hardly a more triumphant and lofty hope as in Romans 8, being more than conquerors through nothing separating us from the love of Christ and all things working for our good, and yet in the midst of this triumphant hope, there is groaning and birthpangs, all of creation groaning and we ourselves groaning in the Holy Spirit. We rightly hope for much but only by crying out humbly as beggars with empty hands. And these empty hands are not such only until they are filled but remain such and are perpetual empty hands. Even in heaven, perhaps something of these perpetual empty hands will remain as, in heaven, things are not clutched possessively to one's chest but shared and what we share in is precisely the self-giving love of the Triune God.