

EDITORIAL: Hope — the Fuel for Faith

*...Hopes set on tomorrow,
Aspiring to the rainbow,
Looking beyond our present woes!*

— SGI President Ikeda, “The Joy of Living”

Hope is a light inside that is gentle and bright by turns.

It can spur us forward, buoyant. It can keep our visions for the future dancing out ahead or dwelling softly inside. It is manna to the soul.

Without hope, every obstacle to our happiness would be perceived as insurmountable. Hope is the fuel for faith — we hope that embracing faith with all of ourselves, again and again, will lead us to become happy, capable people. Without that spark of hope, faith has little chance to flourish.

And developing a hopeful outlook, in the face of life’s hardships, struggles and disappointments, is no small task to set ourselves to each day. We are surrounded by people and events that belie our hopeful intentions. Just snapping on the radio in the morning can immediately drain our hope. Catastrophes abound. One side of the country is burning, the other flooded. Someone trusted their child to a “professional’s” care, and now the child is dead. Our political factions bicker and snipe at one another, while revolution erupts in a country where America’s political influence proves futile. Sometimes simply waiting at a stoplight and glancing into another person’s face will quickly tell you how desperate we are for the clear light of hope.

It is important in the face of all these things to recognize that hope is not the same as wishful thinking. Nor can it cover deep-seated negativity with a thin veneer of positive thinking. “Aspiring to the rainbow,” in President Ikeda’s words, is not meant to imply that we should be wishing things were somehow different from what they are — or using positive affirmations as a substitute for shouldering the responsibility for our happiness.

Alexander Pope’s phrase “Hope springs eternal” suggests this differentiation, by the active verb *springs*. This word qualified by *eternal* speaks of inner workings on a profound level. Learning to imbue our lives with hope, then, is engaging in an act of expansion — springing, as it were.

This, by definition, entails pushing the envelope of our very being. It entails moving the known borders out, up and beyond what we can at present conceive of. When we despair of ever changing any one problem or concern, or we become discouraged by what we perceive as a stalemate in our lives, rekindling hope is fundamental to our ability to take further action.

Hope can seem a whimsical, intangible, or wildly unscientific realm to inhabit. But it is actually a springboard for compelling life-discovery and the hare’s breath between surrender to our inner darkness and the will to struggle on. Learning to hold fast to hope’s expansive vision is the work of faith.

The experiences we accumulate in the process deepen our faith and teach us that remaining hopeful, no matter what the circumstances, is within our power if we “look beyond our present woes,” as President Ikeda’s poem urges, striving to make hope tangible not only for ourselves but for others.

When hope is ignited from within, we immediately feel ourselves relieved from the weight of whatever worry or sorrow is pressing us. These defining moments need to be

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recorded, etched in our spirit. Remembering that it is from our hearts, not our minds, that hope springs eternal, we can train our lives a little at a time to retain hope.

The moment hope swells within is a catalyst for prayer — for action. It is an impetus to study or seek out guidance or encourage someone else. We are sustained by the feeling that despite what we have failed to accomplish today, we can renew our determination to try again tomorrow. Without hope, tomorrow is a bleak prospect. In fact, without it tomorrow doesn't exist.

Hope is as necessary to the human spirit as oxygen and water are essential to our bodies.

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