

What Do We Hope For? *By Deacon Tim Sullivan*

One of the biggest issues in life which parents often overlook in raising their children is the need for hope, the second theological virtue.

In recent years, the fastest growing program on college campuses has not been an academic, athletic or social activity. It's been the counseling services being made available to the students. Many colleges had to out-source counseling resources, as the number of counselors on the staff of the college could not meet the rising demand.

Without hope in something or someone solid and reliable, there will be depression, stress and anxiety. The depressing increase in suicides in our country is testimony to the rise in hopelessness.

The answer to the mental health crisis in our country is the Christian understanding of hope. As defined in the Catholic Catechism, "Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit."

Hope responds to our desire for happiness, inspires our thoughts and activities and keeps us from discouragement. With hope in God, it says in Romans 5:5 that we can even "boast of our afflictions," knowing that affliction gives rise to a hope "that does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given us."

"Hope O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly...Dream that the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your God, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end." St. Teresa of Avila