

## Signs of Resurrection

### “Hope against hope” (Romans 4:18)

God made us bodies. God became a body. He incarnated himself.

Body: image of God.

Body: our destiny, God's destiny.

This is good.

Eternal divine solidarity with human flesh.

Nothing more worthy.

The body is not destined to rise to spirit.

It is the Spirit that chooses to make itself visible in the body.

And the body of God, Jesus Christ, expands, swells, taking over the entire universe: "present everywhere, even within the smallest leaf, in each of the created things, inside and outside, around it and within its veins, below and above, behind and in front..." (Luther). It is right there, in the body, that God and man meet."<sup>1</sup>

In a world of fragments and intentional destruction, we are invited to learn the Japanese art called *Kintsugi*. *Kintsugi* (金継ぎ), or "golden joinery," is the Japanese art of repairing broken ceramics by patching the fracture with lacquer (a type of resin) mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. Unlike other restoration methods that hide damage, cracks, and missing pieces, *kintsugi* highlights the cracks, celebrating the history, imperfections, and resilience of the object, rather than trying to hide them. The practice is deeply rooted in Zen Buddhist philosophy, promoting acceptance of brokenness and celebrating the beauty of human frailty and the imperfections of life. It is a political act of r[e]xisting and a profound spiritual expression of the prophetic resilience and hope (from the verb to hope) that dwells in all of us.

In Romans 4:18, we find a powerful message of hope: "He believed against all hope." In a fragmented world in crisis, this passage invites us to reflect on the nature of hope, especially in times of uncertainty and division. Hope often seems like a luxury amid chaos, but the apostle Paul teaches us that this hope is not just a passive expectation; it is an action that requires courage and faith.

The apostle Paul reads Abraham as someone who refuses to reduce the future to what the eyes can see. His body worn out, his womb barren, his history marked by insurmountable limits: everything seemed to deny the promise. Yet Abraham clings to the faithfulness of God, who calls into existence things that do not exist. Waiting against all hope is not naivety, but a spiritual stubbornness that is anchored in God's character, not in the probabilities of the moment. It is a paschal hope: it passes through the death of the possible to make room for the impossible of God.

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<sup>1</sup> ALVES, R. *I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body. Meditations*. P. 51-52. São Paulo: Paulus, 2006

In a context of crisis, both social and spiritual, we are challenged to perceive and reveal a hope that transcends circumstances, rooted in God's promise and in the certainty that He is faithful to His promises. Hope that is a political act of r[e]xisting and revealing that there is light at the end of the tunnel and that we are not alone.

Within the Anglican Communion, which faces divisions and tensions, Paul's message resonates deeply. Hope against all hope invites us to "hope" — a concept from Paulo Freire that emphasizes the active construction of hope. This act of hoping calls us to unite, to dialogue, and to work together, even when differences seem insurmountable. It is an invitation to exist beyond divisions, to reinterpret the (mis)fortunes of life, to find a common purpose, and to commit ourselves to justice and reconciliation in our Church and in our communities. We are the midwives of resurrection.

The number seven is important in our scriptural tradition. This number can be understood as the fundamental rejection of the exclusion of peoples and the exploitation of nature, recognizing them as agents of change and an integral part of the body of Christ. Therefore, I propose seven points for our journey together.

## **1. Hope as an Act of Resistance, because hoping is a paschal act**

Hope, in times of crisis, is an act of resistance. When we face adversity, hope enables us to challenge injustices and fight for a more just world. In the context of the Anglican Communion, where voices can be divided, hope becomes a bond that unites us in the struggle for dignity and human rights. This resistance is not only against external forces, but also against the internal voices that tell us that change is impossible.

In indigenous communities, hope, the sign of resurrection, is often expressed through the struggle for territory and recognition of their cultures, ancestral knowledge, and wisdom. Indigenous wisdom teaches us that connection to territory is essential to fully exist. By resisting the forces that threaten their lands and ways of life, these communities exemplify the active hope that Paul describes—a hope that manifests itself in action and solidarity.

We have a theopoetic theologian named Rubem Alvez who insists that hope is the "antechamber of beauty"—it makes us cook the future on the stove of the present. In a Brazil wounded by violence and disbelief, Paschal hope moves us to weave networks of protection for life, to promote liberating education everywhere we are, but especially in the peripheries, to open our liturgies and our temples to welcome and echo the cry of people pushed and constrained by situations of vulnerability and threatened with death on a daily basis, simply because they exist. The Diocese of Brasília bears witness to this when it transforms faith into service, prayer into a policy of care, and the Eucharistic table into a school of humanity.

## **2. Hope as the womb of revolution and dismantling of systems of oppression**

Romans 4 names Abraham, but the promise also walks in the womb of Sarah and other women, in the bodies that generate life amid the symbolic sterility (natural, but usually imposed) of the world. Marcella Althaus-Reid<sup>2</sup> in her conversations about "what's under God's skirt," confronts us to see how our theologies can exclude bodies, desires, and experiences. To hope is to make space for silenced voices to be recognized as bearers of promise.

Signs of resurrection emerge when the Church learns from women, LGBTQIA+ people, traditional peoples (indigenous, quilombolas, riverine, among others), the environment, and invisible working people. In the Diocese of Brasília, the ministry that welcomes diversity, promotes dignity, and confronts gender violence and LGBTphobia manifests the hope rooted in this biblical interpretation: God calls into existence new forms of kinship and communion, against all the despair produced by exclusion.

Intercultural and intergenerational dialogue and listening to the environment are fundamental to imagining and ordering a just world in communion. In Brazil, cultural diversity is a treasure that must be celebrated and respected. The Anglican Communion, by opening itself to dialogue with indigenous communities and other cultures, finds new ways to express faith and hope. This dialogue transforms us as an institution, challenges us as guardians of faith and doctrine (which faith, which doctrine?), and helps us to unlearn in order to relearn from the experiences and worldviews of others, enriching our own understanding of the Gospel.

Dialogue is no longer optional or simply a conversation technique; it is imperative for faith and existence. In dialogue, we recognize that the resurrection is not a mere abstraction or only a future promise, but a reality already inaugurated among us. It guides our teleology—the ultimate meaning of our life in God—and trains us to discern *kairos*, God's opportune time, bursting into our chronological time at distinct and interconnected moments.

The stories and traditions of indigenous communities show us that hope is often found in small everyday actions and in resistance to oppression. By listening to and learning from these stories, the Church can become a space where hope flourishes amid difficulties.

### 3. Hope as Community

Hope is a communal experience. In Romans 4:18, Abraham's hope was not only personal; it was a hope that involved his family and his descendants. In the Anglican Communion, we are called to cultivate a community of hope, where all are welcome and everyone's voices are heard. This means creating safe spaces for dialogue and the expression of faith, especially for those who feel marginalized.

The Diocese of Brasília has strived to be an inclusive space, promoting the participation of all members, regardless of their origin. This practice of inclusion is a form of hope, as it recognizes

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<sup>2</sup> See Marcella Althaus-Reid. *Indecent Theology: Theological perversions in sex, gender, and politics*. Ed. Routledge, 2000. Also: Meißner, C. V. (2012). Marcella Althaus-Reid *Indecent theology: Theological perversions in sex, gender and politics*. <https://periodicals.narr.de/index.php/znt/article/view/2094>

that each person brings a unique contribution to the community. A concrete sign of this commitment is Casa A+ in Palmas (TO), which since 2011 has welcomed and accompanied people living with HIV/AIDS, combining health care, guidance on rights, and promotion of citizenship, in partnership with local initiatives and funding. Thus, together, we have built a network of support and solidarity that reflects the hope of the Gospel and translates into actions of listening, protection, and dignified life in the territory.

#### 4. Resurrection and Justice

Worship of God, who chose to reveal himself in the struggle for justice (cf. Exodus) and in extreme mercy (Hosea), is the struggle for the fundamental rights of the person and the planet. This is the worship that pleases God (Jeremiah and Isaiah). That is why the theme of justice (tsedeq - qd,c,) is recurrent throughout the biblical experience and structures the faith of Christians. "Justice only happens when everything is where God wants it to be; when everything is as it 'should be'. The prophets struggle so that the life of the people may be reorganized according to the plan of the Covenant..."<sup>3</sup>

"There is one area in which God is necessarily radical and inflexibly partial: the area of justice. Here God takes the side of justice and against injustice, without the slightest concession, without the slightest "neutrality," and without simple "preferences": God is against injustice and takes the side of the "wronged" (the victims of injustice). God does not and cannot make a "preferential option for justice"<sup>4</sup> ; on the contrary, God identifies with it "by taking a radical stand against injustice and fully embracing the cause of the unjustly treated."<sup>5</sup>

The Diocese of Brasília listens to and welcomes this call in its vision, mission, and pastoral care. It is active in the formation of new leaders, in accompanying communities in vulnerable situations, in directly serving people living on the streets, in its commitment to the environment and on the path to a more sustainable church that is more aligned with the principles of the Forest Communion, in listening to indigenous peoples, and in its ever-prophetic presence in the arena of public policy, working tirelessly for human rights, traditional territories, and violated populations.

#### 5. The Resurrection as a source of Spirituality

Spirituality is the concrete way of living the Gospel, which is linked to following Jesus as the proper "place" of the root experience of God as Mercy. It is a spirituality with a distinctly Trinitarian flavor and experience: it arises from following in the footsteps of Jesus, moved by the Spirit, walking as sons and daughters of the Father and with the hope (and daily attitude) of a definitive encounter

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<sup>3</sup> Various authors. *A Leitura Profética da História (The Prophetic Reading of History)*. Tua Palavra é Vida Collection, Vol. 3. 2nd ed. São Paulo, Brazil: CRB/Loyola, 1994. pp. 21–22.

<sup>4</sup> Those who "preferentially" opt for justice also opt, albeit less preferentially, for injustice. In the dilemma of justice and injustice, there are no "simple preferences" possible: the option is faced with mutually exclusive alternatives.

<sup>5</sup> VIGIL, J. The Option for the Poor is an Option for Justice, and is not Preferential. For a theological-systematic reframing of the Option for the Poor, <http://www.servicioskoinonia.org/relat/371p.htm>.

with Him. We therefore call the spirituality of following Jesus that which has precisely in this following its historical source, its matrix, its fruitful womb or fertile soil, its starting point and its configuring axis. Following Jesus here is understood, in principle, as communion with his life, suffering, death, and resurrection (Rom 6-8), continuation of his work, and participation in his destiny (the cross). It seems to me that this is what we do in our liturgies. This is what it means to "do this in memory of me." To have Jesus as the model of life to be imitated, always aware that this leads to the Cross.

Following Jesus has been understood and is understood, has been lived and is lived, in the Church, in very different ways. Therefore, it seems essential to be more specific. The following that shapes the spirituality to which we refer is that which assumes as a fundamental/structural internal moment (not circumstantial or formal) - although not unique, of course - the option decided by the needy, by sinners/<sup>6</sup>s of the earth, and by their just cause of integral liberation. This is to be like Jesus.

The Diocese of Brasília has promoted initiatives that value indigenous spirituality, creating spaces where ancestral wisdom is respected and incorporated. It has promoted spaces for safety, nutrition, and community growth. The practice of communion and the open table of the Eucharist has helped people find meaning and strength to continue in the prophetic ministry of changing the world and being transformed so that God may be revealed in his fullness as grace and mercy, as a loving and prophetic daily presence. I borrow here the invitation to the Eucharistic table of the Sacred Circle of the Church of Canada:

Come, then, to this table, you who have much faith and you who would like to have more. You who have come often to this sacrament, and you who have not come for a long time. You who try to follow Jesus and you who have failed. Come. It is Christ who invites us to meet him here. These are God's gifts to God's people. (From the Communion Blessing, Christopher Peters)

This practice not only enriches our spirituality, but also reminds us that hope is a collective journey, where all people and nature are invited to participate in the search for the sacred.

## **6. Resurrection as the "School of the Lord" (Rule of St. Benedict)**

By calling the monastery (today we can think of our communities) the "school of the Lord's service," Benedict describes Christian life as a formative journey: a continuous learning of the Gospel in the rhythm of prayer, work, and charity/solidarity. In this school, the Resurrection is not only an event to be believed, but the hope that educates the will, purifies the affections, and reorders the steps toward new life in Christ. Benedictine pedagogy—listening with the "ear of the heart," converting daily, obeying in charity—becomes a paschal exercise: dying to the old man and rising, day after day, in loving obedience. Thus, Easter hope is a form of education: discipline that expands freedom, training in perseverance, and community practice that conforms us to the Risen One, until, by grace, "nothing harsh or heavy" prevents us from serving.

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 9:51-19:28; James 5; 1 Corinthians 1-4; 1 Corinthians 12.

Education is a fundamental pillar for building hope. Paulo Freire teaches us that education should be a liberating process that empowers individuals to dream and act. In the Church, we are called to promote an education that not only transmits knowledge but also inspires action and transformation.

The Diocese of Brasília has been engaged in educational initiatives that seek to empower communities. By offering theological formation and training programs, the Church not only educates but also plants seeds of hope and reveals signs of the resurrection. We are cultivating midwives of hope and resurrection, new people with a new mindset and renewed energy to transform the unjust structures of society, work for peace and reconciliation, and safeguard the environment as our common home. This is a sign that the Good News of the Gospel and the Kingdom is being proclaimed and lived. Education continues, therefore, to be a means of "giving hope" and creating a more just and egalitarian future.

## **7. Hope – revealing the signs of resurrection in Pastoral Action**

Giving hope, revealing the signs of resurrection that we are and that we see, must be manifested in our pastoral action. As leaders and members of a community of resurrection, we are called to be agents of hope in our communities. This means being present in people's daily struggles, offering support and encouragement. Pastoral action must be an expression of the hope we seek to live.

The Diocese of Brasília has distinguished itself for its commitment to social action, meeting the needs of vulnerable communities. By engaging in projects that assist and promote human dignity, the Church demonstrates that hope is a living force that manifests itself in concrete actions. Hope, therefore, is not just an idea, but a reality that must be lived in every act of love and service.

## **On the joint journey**

As we reflect on the "Signs of Resurrection," we are challenged to live a hope that transcends barriers. In a fragmented world, the message of Romans 4:18 invites us to hope, to resist, to dialogue, and to act in solidarity. May we, together, build an Anglican Communion that is a beacon of hope, reflecting the love of Christ in our lives and in our communities.