



# *Intellectus Spei*: Hope as Trusting in the Uncertain. Thinking with Pope Francis’s *Spes non Confundit*

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**Abstract:** This article explores *intellectus spei*—understanding hope as a rational and existential virtue of openness—situated at the intersection of philosophy, theology, and ethics. Drawing on thinkers such as Paul Ricoeur, Martha C. Nussbaum, Richard Kearney, and Karl Rahner, the author presents hope not as emotional optimism or probabilistic expectation but as a form of rationality grounded in trust and imaginative engagement with the unknown. In response to global uncertainty and technological determinism, this article interprets Pope Francis’s *Spes non confundit* as a call to reclaim hope as an act of trust, not prediction. This article moves from a phenomenology of hope in uncertainty (Section 2), through its ontological and theological dimensions (Section 3), toward its transformative role in forgiveness and mercy (Section 4). Section 5 critiques the distortions of hope under materialism and nihilism, while Section 6 turns to the eschatological horizon, where hope finds fulfillment in divine justice and eternal life. The article’s conclusion presents Christian hope as a form of life and a “wisdom of uncertainty”—an existential stance that neither escapes reality nor succumbs to it but transforms it through trust in God’s unseen promise. *Intellectus spei* thus emerges as a structural shift in thought: from closure to openness, from the calculable to the creative, and from resignation to responsibility.

**Keywords:** hope, trust, Pope Francis, *intellectus spei*

## 1. Introduction: The Structure of Hope

### 1.1. Hope as the Rational Virtue of Openness—*Intellectus spei*

The concept of *intellectus spei*, analogous to the classical *intellectus fidei*, refers to the rational dimension of hope as not an emotional impulse but as a deeply reasoned attitude toward reality. This understanding of hope is not grounded in the calculation of probabilities or empirical forecasting of the future but in a conviction regarding a meaning that has not yet been revealed, yet whose possibility is genuinely embedded within the structure of thought. As Paul Ricoeur observes, “Hope is not a theme that comes after other themes, an idea that closes the system, but an impulse that opens the system, that breaks the closure of the system; it is a way of reopening what was unduly closed.” (Ricoeur 1995, 204) Hope, when conceived intellectually, does not conclude reasoning but rather radically transcends it. *Intellectus spei* is thus a form of rationality that does not aim primarily to produce knowledge but rather to create space for that which has been previously excluded or rendered invisible. Drawing on Reinhart Koselleck, Ricoeur employs the notions of

“space of experience” and “horizon of expectation.” He writes, “As with experience in relation to the present, expectation relative to the future is inscribed in the present. It is the future-become-present (*vergegenwärtigte Zukunft*), turned toward the not-yet.” (Ricoeur 1988, 208) Hope, therefore, does not exist outside of time or in opposition to reason but is inscribed within the present as opening up to the future that is already latent—through the very act of expectation. In this sense, *intellectus spei* is both an existential and epistemological impulse: It enables us to move beyond the “closed systems” of thought and to perceive a surplus of meaning that is neither yet proven nor objectively evident. It is a particular form of rationality, akin to the thoughts of Emmanuel Lévinas or Søren Aabye Kierkegaard—a conviction that it is worthwhile to trust in existence even in the face of uncertainty. This *intellectus* does not eliminate ignorance but rather transforms it into a space for meaning and action. As Ricoeur concludes, “If there is something like an *intellectus spei* (as a parallel to the expression *intellectus fidei*), it may be that this *intellectus spei*, this intelligibility of hope, does not consist in pointing to a specific object but to a structural change within philosophical discourse.” (Ricoeur 1995, 203) Hope, as an act of reason, does not point to a particular object but alters the very structure of thought—from closure to openness, from an ending to an unexpected beginning. Thus, *intellectus spei* is the capacity to perceive possibility where reason sees only limitation.

## 1.2. Hope as Trusting in the Uncertain

In the face of global uncertainty, accelerated technologization, and a prevailing culture of control, *Spes non confundit* by Pope Francis emerges as a significant theological intervention, calling for a renewed understanding of the future. Hope—understood not as optimism but as trust—is presented in the bull as a fundamental virtue, rooted not in predictability but in openness to God’s action. The Christian does not organize the future but receives it as a gift, engaging in creative and humble action despite the absence of guaranteed outcomes. In a world where data and algorithms increasingly shape human decisions, hope—according to Francis—is not an anachronism but a spiritual necessity. The bull is not a doctrinal document but a pastoral exhortation to live according to the spirit of *intellectus spei*: a mode of understanding hope as trusting in the uncertain and interpreting reality through the eyes of the Risen Christ.

This article offers a multidimensional analysis of hope as an existential, theological, and ethical virtue, situated between uncertainty and the ultimate meaning of existence. Section 2 presents a phenomenological reflection on hope in the face of the unknown, emphasizing its paradoxical nature—the tension between expectation and struggle. Promise is examined as a fundamental source of hope, while its stabilizing role amid change is captured through the metaphor of an anchor. Section 3 approaches hope ontologically, as a dynamic movement rooted in faith and love, animated by the Holy Spirit, and expressed through patient endurance. Section 4 explores hope

as a transformative force, presenting forgiveness and mercy as creative acts that open the future. Section 5 addresses the distortions of hope caused by materialism, individualism, and nihilism, and emphasizes the pedagogical and cultural dimensions of hope as a space of community formation. Section 6 moves toward the eschatological horizon—hope as the meaning and goal of life, oriented toward eternal life and final judgment as the fulfillment of justice and mercy. The conclusion underscores hope as the wisdom of uncertainty.

## 2. Hope in the Face of Uncertainty

### 2.1. Hope in Relation to the Unknown and the Unpredictable

*Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. (SNC 1)*

Human life is by nature marked by unpredictability and fragility. It is subject to randomness and external factors that lie beyond the scope of human control. In such a situation, hope cannot be equated with naive optimism or an illusory belief in guaranteed success. Instead, it is a conscious trust in the face of uncertainty, an act of opening oneself to the future, despite the lack of guarantees. Hope, while recognizing the limitations of human agency, does not collapse into despair—on the contrary, it creates a space for moral action unafraid of risk and unpredictability. In contrast to *scientia*, which aims at demonstrable knowledge, *intellectus* is a form of contemplative, receptive cognition. In the context of hope, it becomes the capacity to remain open to a future that is not secured by human control but grounded in God’s faithfulness. It is not the hope of prediction, but the hope of promise—thus, it is not about hope based on forecasting, but on promise.

### 2.2. The Paradox of Hope—Between Expectation and Struggle

Christian hope is theocentric and eschatological: It expresses the expectation of salvation, peace, and renewal both individually and communally. In the New Testament, *elpis* is not an emotion but a disposition rooted in the event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christian hope is not optimism but trust in the face of unpredictability (cf. Rom 4:18; 5:1–11). The verb *elpizein* most often corresponds to the Hebrew בְּטַח, meaning “to trust” (Hahn 2002, 740). In the expressions of hope, we observe such attitudes as patience, peace, faith, joy, courage, humility, generosity, sobriety, and prayer. The prayer “Our Father” (*lex orandi*) simultaneously becomes an expression of hope (*lex sperandi*), especially in the petition for the

coming of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God “has drawn near” (Mark 1:15), that is, it is accessible, yet it remains an object of hope (cf. Mark 4:30ff.; Matt 13:31ff.). Watchfulness (Matt 24:25), perseverance (Mark 13:13), and faith (Gospel of John) are its integral components (Woschitz 1993, 202–3). Hope is one of the deepest and yet most enigmatic experiences of human life. It dwells in the human heart as the “desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring.” (SNC 1) It thus emerges where there is no certainty, where knowledge gives way to expectation, and where control over reality is lost. Uncertainty and unpredictability constitute the space in which hope gains meaning. It is not an illusion but a conscious choice to turn toward what is possible. As Pope Francis points out, “hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfillment, a desire to achieve great things.” (FT 55) Hope pushes the human being toward self-transcendence—toward what is unknown and risky. Hope cannot exist without the risk of disappointment. Martha C. Nussbaum emphasizes that the ethical posture involves trust in the face of uncertainty. It is a trust that acknowledges the tragic dimension of human life and enables one to act responsibly despite the lack of guarantees. Analyzing Greek tragedy, Nussbaum shows that the moral value of a person does not depend on the outcomes of their actions, but on how they respond to fate: “thus when a mortal relies on a god there is, along with the basic security, an element of uncertainty and vulnerability that makes this ethical posture nearer to that of the ‘plant’ tradition that some texts taken in isolation might suggest.” (Nussbaum 1986, 401) This idea is echoed in a later reflection by Nussbaum, quoted by Maria Popova:

To be a good human being is to have a kind of openness to the world, an ability to trust uncertain things beyond your own control, that can lead you to be shattered in very extreme circumstances for which you were not to blame. That says something very important about the human condition of the ethical life: that it is based on a trust in the uncertain and on a willingness to be exposed; it’s based on being more like a plant than like a jewel, something rather fragile, but whose very particular beauty is inseparable from its fragility. (as cited in Popova 2014)

Hope, from this viewpoint, is an act of courage—not a defense against loss, but an opening to life despite its risks. As Donovan Plumb notes, emotions—including hope—are a form of rational thinking:

[E]motions are far from being unreasonable or hopelessly not capable of contributing to the good life, well-being and human development . . . the evaluations of the emotions are subject to being more or less right or wrong . . . and the judgements that they sustain are still cooperative to both epistemic and, particularly, phronetic reasoning of our human development. (Plumb 2014, 145–62)

The ethical person is not the one who controls the world, but the one who can trust in values amid its unpredictability. According to Nussbaum, hope is the source of *phronesis*—practical wisdom that enables moral action in the face of complexity and tragedy. It requires reconciliation with risk but also the courage to act and take responsibility for one's choices. The experience of hope thus becomes an experience of tragic knowledge—acting without certainty, based on situational judgment. This stance is an affirmation of life, a commitment to the good even in the face of uncertainty. For Nussbaum, it is a form of moral resilience—the ability to create meaning even in a world that may be indifferent or hostile. From this perspective, hope also has an apophatic dimension. Uncertainty is not a void, but the space of God's action. Hope does not rely on the expectation of a positive outcome but on trust that God acts even where no evident signs of His presence are visible. In this sense, the phenomenology of hope reveals not only its sublimity but also its fragility. Hope is the movement of the soul toward a good that has not yet arrived—a “bridge between expectation and fear,” between what is desired and what is unknown. This is what makes it a profoundly human experience.

### 2.3. Promise as a Source of Hope

*Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead,  
a message of hope that fulfils the ancient promises,  
leads to glory and, grounded in love, does not disappoint. (SNC 2)*

In a world marked by uncertainty and unreliable promises, Christian hope appears as something radically different—not a fleeting comfort or naive expectation of a happy ending but a deeply rooted assurance of meaning. The foundation of this hope is not human strength or favorable circumstances but the person of Jesus Christ—crucified and risen. As Pope Francis emphasizes, “Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, a message of hope that fulfils the ancient promises, leads to glory and, grounded in love, does not disappoint.” (SNC 2) He is the promise that does not fail, as He is the fulfillment of the desires and prophecies that preceded His coming. Christian hope grows from the fact of the resurrection—an event that does not belong solely to the past. As expressed in the Easter Vigil homily, Jesus' resurrection is not a thing of the past: “Christ is risen, and with him he makes our hope and creativity rise.” (Francis 2018b)

The resurrection of Christ endures as a spiritual reality, present in the hearts of believers through the action of the Holy Spirit. This is why hope, whose source is God, does not disappoint—it is not based on human calculations but on love that transcends death. Since God is the source of life, He is at the same time the only foundation of hope for new lives, not only in the future but also right now, in a history marked by suffering and death (Gardocki 2025, 529). It is an attitude of trust and

courage, enabling meaningful action and life despite uncertainty about outcomes. However, this does not imply that Christian hope is free from pain, doubt, or suffering. On the contrary, its strength lies in its ability to give meaning even to what is difficult and incomprehensible. The Christian does not trust that everything will go according to plan but that every event—even painful ones—can be integrated into a greater plan of goodness and love, whose fullness is revealed in Christ. Therefore, Christ is not only the source of hope but also the rational foundation of trust. In Him, one can find meaning in a world full of contradictions, because His promise is grounded in love that has already conquered death. Such hope does not disappoint—not because it guarantees an easy life, but because it offers a life filled with meaning. In this context, the biblical promise takes on a special role—not as a guarantee of specific events, but as a space of possibility—an openness to the future. Richard Kearney notes, “God reveals himself, in keeping with his promissory note in Exodus, as a God that neither is nor is not but may be.” (Kearney 2001, 537) This is not a God enclosed in actuality, but one open to the future—to a fulfillment that is not predictable, but possible. As the author further explains, “God is repudiating any name that would seek to appropriate Him here and now as some thaumaturgical presence. Instead, God keeps Himself open for a future.” (Kearney 2001, 534) This openness contains the dynamism of hope—not as knowledge of the future, but as faith in its unfolding. The biblical formula “I-AM-WHO-MAY-BE” contains an apophatic theology, presenting God as transcending “being” and revealing Himself rather as “possibility.” As Kearney writes, “In the circular words, I-AM-WHO-MAY-BE, God transfigures and exceeds being. His *esse* reveals itself, surprisingly and dramatically, as *posse*.” (Kearney 2001, 539) This vision of God opens the space for hope that is not based on determinism but on a dynamic relationship with the future and trust in promise. This existential depth of Christian hope is also affirmed in the reflections of Tomasz Węclawski. He writes:

I can encounter God even where I myself choose nothing, where I am completely powerless before myself and before everything that was and could have been in my life; this is most simply shown to me by the crucified Jesus, who rose from the dead. For this is indeed the revelation of a future that opens completely unexpectedly: I too may have a future, since the dead Jesus has a future. In my greatest despair, I may have it as He Himself does in the despair of His death. (Węclawski 2003, 10; all translations are the author’s own)

Węclawski also develops the idea of God’s presence in human choices:

In every one of my choices I always encounter God, this is most simply shown to me, since I find that my choice, insofar as it is truly my own, always concerns me and never ends anything, but always has a continuation—a future. In this way, the future becomes my sorrow or my joy, but in either case—each time differently!—God awaits me: precisely because of

this my future always turns out to be truly different from what I thought when making this or that choice. (Węclawski 2003, 94)

This eschatological dimension of hope is also developed by Joseph Ratzinger, who emphasizes that:

Heaven is accordingly that future of man and of mankind which the latter cannot give to itself, which is therefore closed to it so long as it waits for itself, and which was first and thoroughly opened up in the man whose field of existence was God and through whom God entered into the creature “man.” (Ratzinger 1970, 240)

It is in Christ, who transcended the limits of biological life (*bios*) through death and entered into new life, that the future becomes accessible to humanity. Ratzinger also underscores the factual and external nature of the Resurrection as the foundation of Christian hope: “They testify to an approach which did not rise from the hearts of the disciples but came to them from outside, convinced them against their doubts and made them certain that the Lord had truly risen.” (Ratzinger 1970, 237) All this indicates that Christian hope is a reality rooted in an event that took place in history, yet transcends its boundaries. It is a hope that does not disappoint, because it is grounded not in what is variable and human, but in the faithful God who is “possibility”—an open future—for every person.

#### 2.4. Stability in Change—Hope as an Anchor

*The image of the anchor is eloquent; it helps us to recognize the stability and security that is ours amid the troubled waters of this life, provided we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus. (SNC 25)*

The image of the anchor, which frequently appears in the Christian tradition, constitutes one of the most expressive symbols of hope. Hope, which is not a fleeting emotion dependent on changing external conditions but a deeply grounded certainty in the love of God, which endures regardless of life’s storms. “Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God’s love.” (SNC 3) In Christian anthropology and spirituality, the anchor is not a symbol of stagnation or an escape from the world but of dynamic perseverance—a resistance to the variability of life through rooting oneself in something permanent and absolute. As Pope Francis states:

The image of the anchor is eloquent; it helps us to recognize the stability and security that is ours amid the troubled waters of this life, provided we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus. The storms that buffet us will never prevail, for we are firmly anchored in the hope born

of grace, which enables us to live in Christ and to overcome sin, fear and death. This hope, which transcends life's fleeting pleasures and the achievement of our immediate goals, makes us rise above our trials and difficulties, and inspires us to keep pressing forward, never losing sight of the grandeur of the heavenly goal to which we have been called. (*SNC* 25)

Contemporary culture often identifies hope with success, planning, and the projection of a future achieved through willpower. However, Christian hope is an “act of rooting” in something radically different—in *adventus*, that is, in the coming reality of God, of which man is not the author. Such hope is not based on *futurum*, the projection of a future built according to human calculations, but on the openness of the heart to a gift that exceeds all human predictability. A model of such hope is Abraham, who abandons human rationality based on predictability in order to trust in God. This moment of transition from human to divine hope is simultaneously an act of faith. Saint Paul also encourages us to forsake our own plans in favor of the hope that flows from the promise of salvation: “In hope we were saved” (Rom 8:24a). In this context, the verbs *apekdechesthai* appear three times in Rom 8:19, 23, 25—expressing an anticipation of fulfillment, which is the content of Christian hope. Here we are dealing with a hope that is not subjective optimism but a profound openness to God's promise. Węclawski articulates this particularly aptly, highlighting the relationship between the variability of human experience and the constancy of God's presence:

Whatever the case with me—whether I rule over or fail to control my own life—God is and is God for me precisely where I am now and where I may still be. Such a God is not immutable in unshaken perfection but constant in the movement in which, giving Himself to Himself, He also gives Himself to the human being: to each under their own name, in their own place, in their own life. Our God is unchangingly faithful, is unchanging love, which is truly unchanging only when it truly accompanies the beloved in every motion and in every stillness—and when it accompanies as love, always ready to give itself. (Węclawski 2003, 95)

This distinction between immutability and constancy is key to understanding the Christian concept of hope. God is not unchanging in the sense of being unresponsive to human history but is faithful—constant—in His mercy, which accompanies the human person regardless of their fate. Such hope, rooted in God's faithful presence, can be courageous and transcend personal calculations. “Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile.” (*FT* 55) The image of the anchor not only illustrates stability in the face of life's changing circumstances but also points to the reality of hope that transcends the temporal world and leads toward the ultimate reality. Christian hope is stable not because it is based on guarantees of success, but because it is rooted in the

person of the faithful God—love that accompanies the human person in every state. It is a hope that does not disappoint because its source is not human effort but grace.

### 3. The Ontology of Hope as Existential Dynamism

#### 3.1. Faith and Love as Sources of Hope's Rootedness

*Here we see the reason why this hope perseveres in the midst of trials: founded on faith and nurtured by charity, it enables us to press forward in life. (SNC 3)*

Christian hope does not exist in isolation from the other theological virtues. It is rooted in faith, and its nourishment through love defines its identity, dynamism, and permanence. In 1 Thess 1:3, the Apostle Paul juxtaposes the triad of faith, love, and hope with practical expressions of spiritual life—work, toil, and perseverance—to describe the fullness of Christian life. He thereby indicates the inner coherence of the Christian attitude, in which each virtue supports and animates the others (see also 1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 5:8; Col 1:4f.; Eph 1:15f.). Hope is based, on the one hand, on the salvific action of God already accomplished, and on the other, it is directed toward the future in which this action will find its fulfillment. As noted in *Spes non confundit*: “Here we see the reason why this hope perseveres in the midst of trials: founded on faith and nurtured by charity, it enables us to press forward in life.” (SNC 3) Similarly, in *Lumen fidei*: “The Holy Spirit transforms us, lights up our way to the future and enables us joyfully to advance along that way on wings of hope. Thus wonderfully interwoven, faith, hope and charity are the driving force of the Christian life.” (LF 7) Pope Benedict XVI, in the encyclical *Spe salvi*, directly links hope to the experience of faith. From the very beginning, he writes, “Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present . . .” (SpS 1) This hope does not derive from philosophical or psychological theories but from revelation and a relationship with the Person of Christ: “To come to know God—the true God—means to receive hope.” (SpS 3) Faith, as knowledge of and trust in the revealing God, opens the space for hope as a possible mode of existence. Benedict XVI further emphasizes that action and suffering are settings for learning hope: faith in eternal life, as hope is a force that transforms the present, even when it is difficult; hope is active and shapes life (SpS 35–40). Love plays a crucial role here, making hope active and directed toward the other person. Pope states that faith, hope and charity go together:

Those of our contemporaries who leave everything for love of Christ, so as to bring to men and women the faith and love of Christ, and to help those who are suffering in body and spirit. In their case, the new ‘substance’ has proved to be a genuine ‘substance’; from the

hope of these people who have been touched by Christ, hope has arisen for others who were living in darkness and without hope. (*SpS* 8)

These virtues are thus not independent faculties of the soul but form an integral unity of the spiritual life—a unity that constitutes “the material of the new man’s life.” Benedict XVI presents hope as essential to the spiritual life, just as oxygen is to physical life: “. . . man needs God, otherwise he remains without hope.” (*SpS* 23) The relationship with God, born of faith and bearing fruit in love, is therefore the essence of hope—not an idea but the real experience of God’s saving presence. Karl Rahner proposes an original approach to the theology of hope, rejecting the notion of a third distinct faculty of the soul corresponding to the virtue of hope. Instead, he argues, “It would certainly be false for us to seek to find a solution to the problem by . . . [postulating] a third basic power to which hope would correspond as its appropriate virtue.” (Rahner 1973, 247) “We must hold fast . . . that there are two basic modes of human (transcendental) self-realisation: awareness of, and reflection upon the self through knowledge and through free love, corresponding to the two basic transcendentals of *Verum* and *Bonum*, in which the one (*Unum*) being (*Ens*) imposes itself.” (Rahner 1973, 245–46)

Therefore, Rahner understands hope as an “original and unifying medium” that links the experience of reason in faith with the will in love. This virtue does not possess complete knowledge or the fullness of love but is a permanent attitude of the person toward the infinite mystery of God: “Hope . . . names that permanent and pervasive attitude of the whole person in the ‘radical transcendence of self and surrender of self which is entailed in the act of reaching out for truth into the unfathomable mystery, and . . . radical self-surrender and self-transcendence of . . . love.’” (Rahner 1973, 249) According to Rahner, hope is an “outwards from the self” movement that unifies the sinful and grace-transformed reality of intellect and will: “Hope thus names the underlying ‘attitude’ or ‘basic character’ or ‘common factor’ that the intellect and will share in their salvific encounter with God; and since salvation does not end, neither does hope.” (Rahner 1973, 257–58) Thus, hope is not merely a temporary means leading to eternity—it is the fundamental posture toward eternity itself, which is never exhausted: “Hope is . . . that basic modality of the very attitude to the eternal which precisely as such sets the true advance to eternity in train.” (Rahner 1973, 258)

### 3.2. The Role of the Holy Spirit in Hope

*The Holy Spirit illumines all believers with the light of hope. (SNC 3)*

In Christian theology, the role of the Holy Spirit in hope is not limited to the function of a comforter or spiritual guide but extends deeper into the ontological and existential dimension of the believer’s life. The Holy Spirit is portrayed as an “inner

light” and a source of perseverance in the everyday experience of hope. As Pope Francis emphasizes, “The Holy Spirit illumines all believers with the light of hope. He keeps that light burning, like an ever-burning lamp, to sustain and invigorate our lives.” (SNC 3) This light is not a fleeting illumination but a lasting source of spiritual energy that enables a life of hope despite adversity. Hope, in its pneumatological aspect, is therefore a dynamic process, not a static expectation. Pope Francis compares it to a seed that, though hidden, contains within itself the potential for growth and durability: “The kingdom of God is already present in this world and is growing, here and there, and in different ways: like the small seed which grows into a great tree. . . . The kingdom is here, it returns, it struggles to flourish anew. . . . May we never remain on the sidelines of this march of living hope!” (EG 278) This seed does not grow in isolation—its growth and maturation are made possible through the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit, who “sustains” and “invigorates” the life of the believer.

Such a theological understanding of the Holy Spirit’s role in hope is further expanded by Jürgen Moltmann, who argues that hope should be considered not only in eschatology but also in pneumatology. The Holy Spirit appears as the active force making the future possible in the present, particularly through healing, liberation, and justice: “The Spirit is the dynamic force making the future possible in the present, particularly through healing, liberation, and justice.” (Moltmann 1977, xv) Thus understood, hope is not passive waiting but an “active trust in the Spirit’s work, even in the midst of uncertainty or despair.” (Moltmann 1992, xi) In light of these views, hope appears as a dynamic relationship between the human person and the Holy Spirit—a relationship in which not only survival in the face of daily hardship becomes possible, but also the transformation of that everyday life through the presence of the Spirit as an “ever-burning lamp.” Christian hope, therefore, does not exist without this presence—the Holy Spirit gives it form, direction, and enduring strength.

### 3.3. The Patience of Hope—The Strength to Endure in Time

*Evangelization is sustained by the power flowing from Christ’s cross and resurrection.  
In this way, we learn to practice a virtue closely linked to hope,  
namely patience. (SNC 4)*

A full understanding of Christian hope in the New Testament requires consideration of attitudes that are both its consequences and expressions. One such attitude is patience, expressed in the Greek terms *hypomonē* (noun) and *hypomenein* (verb), which mean perseverance or endurance and the act of continuing in such states. In the Vulgate, *hypomonē* is typically translated as *patientia*, while in the Septuagint it corresponds to terms derived from the Hebrew root QWH, indicating a waiting oriented toward God Himself (Ps 33:20). Hope, which reaches toward the invisible and

eternal reality, is already expressed in earthly life as endurance in the face of trials and adversity (Malina 2024, 102–3). Patience is thus not merely passive acceptance of difficulty but an active attitude of hope—its embodied expression. As Pope Francis emphasizes:

Evangelization is sustained by the power flowing from Christ's cross and resurrection. In this way, we learn to practice a virtue closely linked to hope, namely *patience*. In our fast-paced world, we are used to wanting everything now. . . . space and time yield to an ever-present "now." (SNC 4)

Patience is therefore not only a spiritual virtue but also a form of resistance to the logic of modernity, which eliminates waiting and the space for maturation. Saint Paul also frequently connects patience with perseverance and trust in God's promises while pointing to God's patience as both the source and model for humanity: "Saint Paul often speaks of patience in the context of our need for perseverance and confident trust in God's promises. Yet, before all else, he testifies to God's own patience." (SNC 5) This divine patience is revealed not only in salvation history but also in the personal relationship with the believer, who may face trials, misunderstanding, and suffering in life. In such a context, hope is expressed through patient endurance. As we read in *Gaudete et exsultate*:

Hard times may come, when the cross casts its shadow, yet nothing can destroy the supernatural joy that "adapts and changes, but always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved." That joy brings deep security, serene hope and a spiritual fulfilment that the world cannot understand or appreciate. (GE 125)

Patience means bearing the burden of the present, accepting its trials, trusting that the Lord will not disappoint. In this light, patience emerges as a spiritual strength that does not primarily offer psychological comfort but enables perseverance in darkness. This is perfectly illustrated by the image of hope presented by Antoni Gołubiew in *Wygnaniec* [The Exile]. The protagonist does not experience the presence of God; he is alienated, lonely, separated from grace and community, yet he does not cease to keep vigil. He does not know God's plans, receives no signs or affirmations of the meaning of his journey, yet remains faithful in hope. This "trust without response, without signs, without rewards" becomes the highest expression of Christian patience—silent and pure (Gołubiew 1962, 1509–47). Gołubiew writes that true hope "is born not in light, but in darkness—and precisely because of that, it is so human." It is in this darkness, in silent vigilance, that "something" can occur—something that becomes the beginning of redemption. Hope, therefore, does not remove uncertainty or pain, nor does it provide guarantees or answers—its strength lies in the very act of

enduring. In a world of immediacy and the dominance of the “now,” patience as the fruit of hope becomes not only a virtue but also a testimony—silent yet eloquent—of God’s presence in human life.

## 4. Hope as Forgiveness and Transformation

### 4.1. Forgiveness as a Creative Act: Opening the Future through Hope

*The sacrament of Reconciliation is not only a magnificent spiritual gift . . .  
It can allow us to change the future and to live different lives,  
free of anger, animosity and vindictiveness. (SNC 23)*

Forgiveness, rooted in the experience of God’s mercy and grace, emerges as a creative act that opens the human person to a future filled with hope. In Christian theology, the act of forgiveness is not limited to the annulment of guilt but initiates a spiritual renewal and transformation of the person, granting new possibilities for action. As emphasized in *The Priest, Minister of Divine Mercy*, the call to conversion and forgiveness constitutes an integral part of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, touching the “contrite heart,” moved by grace and led to a response to the love of God “who first loved us.” (Congregation for the Clergy 2011, 27) Conversion, as a process of ongoing transformation, resembles Abraham’s journey—a pilgrimage marked by uncertainty but also by hope and the discovery of God. It signifies an inner breakthrough, a *modus experiendi*—a mode of being that presupposes readiness for new experiences and the courage to change oneself and to open to new understandings of God, the world, and oneself. As Ricoeur observes, at the foundation of this process lies a moment of otherness: “learning to live in the face of our perplexities, deficiencies, and anxieties.” (Ricoeur 1994, 35) This becomes possible through grace, understood as excess—a gift that surpasses our calculations and opens the person to rebirth. In this sense, as Ricoeur notes, forgiveness rooted in the economy of gift enables a spiritual journey toward oneself, grounded in grace (*châris*).

This very dimension is emphasized by Pope Francis, who indicates that the sacrament of reconciliation not only heals the past but, above all, opens the future. The experience of complete forgiveness generates in the human heart the capacity to forgive others:

Forgiveness does not change the past; it cannot change what happened in the past, yet it can allow us to change the future and to live different lives, free of anger, animosity and vindictiveness. Forgiveness makes possible a brighter future, which enables us to look at the past with different eyes, now more serene, albeit still bearing the trace of past tears. (SNC 23)

This profound connection between forgiveness and hope is also manifested in pastoral gestures, such as the opening of the Holy Door in a prison, which the pope interprets as an invitation: “In order to offer prisoners a concrete sign of closeness, I would myself like to open a Holy Door in a prison, as a sign inviting prisoners to look to the future with hope and a renewed sense of confidence.” (SNC 10) Similarly, in a homily during the Jubilee of Mercy, the pope declared to forgive means to give someone a new start: “Today, in God’s sight, may your hope be kindled anew. So may none of you allow yourselves to be held captive by the past! True enough, even if we wanted to, we can never rewrite the past. But the history that starts today, and looks to the future, has yet to be written, by the grace of God and your personal responsibility.” (Francis 2016) Elsewhere: “A person without hope is unable to forgive, is unable to give the solace of forgiveness and to *have* the solace of forgiveness.” (Francis 2017a) From a philosophical perspective, forgiveness appears as a response to the tragic dimension of human freedom, as portrayed by Ricoeur: “Evil makes of freedom an impossible possibility. . . . we cannot change the nature of our freedom. . . . Here we reach the bottom of the abyss.” (Ricoeur 1995, 68) Precisely in the face of this impossibility, religion emerges as a space of hope—“hope for completion and fulfilment”—namely the regeneration of the person, which cannot be achieved by will alone but requires grace and the act of gift (van den Hengel 2002, 129). Forgiveness also responds to the existential tension between the irreversibility of the past and the unpredictability of the future. As Hannah Arendt notes, “But the cure against this irrevocability—that one can never undo our actions—is the uniquely human ability to forgive. And the cure against the unpredictability . . . lies embedded in the ability to make and keep promises.” (Arendt 1958, 301) In her interpretation of Kafka’s parable, Arendt emphasizes that the human being does not exist within time as a linear continuum but rather in the “rupture” between past and future. This “spatial” moment of the present—*v̄v̄*—is the space of action, thought, and decision. The exercise of thinking, as Arendt observes, opens the possibility of redefining concepts such as time and hope—not as an escape from time but as its creative cultivation (Arendt 2006). In line with the theology of newness (*Novum*), hope does not erase the past but transforms it. Forgiveness is a “newness” that is revealed in the present, interrupting the flow of history but not destroying it. As one commentator has put it, “hope arises from God’s future breaking into the present, described as the category of *Novum*—newness that transforms the world without erasing its past.” Thus, forgiveness becomes not only an ethical obligation or an act of will but a profoundly spiritual experience of hope. It is a gift that interrupts the logic of revenge and hatred and simultaneously a creative act that opens a space for new life—a life that can be different because it is rooted in grace and the promise of God’s future.

## 4.2. Mercy as an Active Form of Hope

*Works of mercy are also works of hope that give rise to immense gratitude. . . .  
Care given to them is a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope  
that calls for the choral participation of society as a whole. (SNC 11)*

Mercy is not merely an emotional impulse or an act of compassion but a concrete, active form of hope that reshapes reality and interpersonal relationships. In this view, works of mercy are both signs and instruments of hope—they give meaning to suffering, heal social wounds, and create a space for authentic human relationships. Mercy not only heals but also opens the horizon of the future. As *Misericordiae vultus* affirms, “Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instils in us the courage to look to the future with hope.” (MV 10) Hope, therefore, is not a passive expectation for the improvement of circumstances but an active commitment to the transformation of the world. Pope Francis writes:

The rich must be generous and not avert their eyes from the faces of their brothers and sisters in need. . . . hunger is a scandal, an open wound on the body of our humanity, and it summons all of us to a serious examination of conscience. . . . More than a question of generosity, this is a matter of justice. (SNC 16)

Here, Francis points to the necessity of action—hope must be embodied in concrete acts of mercy and justice. In this sense, hope becomes an “active trust” that does not end in dreams but leads to action. In *Fratelli tutti*, Francis writes that hope encourages us to dream of a different world, one where all are respected, cared for, and uplifted (FT 127). The social dimension of hope is revealed in its connection to the idea of justice. Justice, as has been observed, is never a fully achieved state but a continual process. In a world where there is no complete certainty about moral progress, hope sustains the efforts of individuals and communities so as not to fall into despair or complacency. It is a “key emotion” for the functioning of democracy—it enables the ongoing struggle for the common good and human dignity. In this context, *Laudato si’* is worth recalling, where Pope Francis calls for “a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet.” This is not a call born of pessimism but of hope that acts: “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us.” (LS 13) In this way, as theology notes, *intellectus spei* does not lead to resignation but to engagement. It calls for a hope that acts, listens, builds peace, and chooses mercy. It is a trust that translates into justice. Mercy as a form of hope also carries a profound anthropological

and existential dimension. Encounters with the other, undertaken “for” the other, give meaning to our freedom. As James Pambrum writes:

The meaning of our freedom is found in the encounters we make “for” the other—in the measure of who we ourselves are. The measure of a generous person is the experience of the great events of our time. Yet generosity is sometimes hope, hope in the world, in the sense that it is trust in the other. (Pambrum 2003, 267)

In this way, mercy not only responds to the needs of the moment but also builds lasting foundations of community based on mutual trust, compassion, and solidarity. Acts of mercy, rooted in hope, transform social relationships and reveal an alternative way of life in which the future is not merely an extension of the present but a space of fulfillment—made possible by grace, justice, and shared commitment.

## 5. Deformations of Hope

### 5.1. Materialism, Individualism, and Nihilism as Threats to Hope

*Since men and women, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26), cannot rest content with getting along one day at a time, settling for the here and now and seeking fulfillment in material realities alone. (SNC 9)*

Contemporary culture, focused on the present and on material goods, leads to an impoverishment of the anthropological understanding of hope. The reduction of human experience to the “here and now” and utilitarian values results in a narrowing of the existential perspective, which can lead to the loss of meaning and inner emptiness. As Pope Francis observes:

Since men and women, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26), cannot rest content with getting along one day at a time, settling for the here and now and seeking fulfillment in material realities alone. This leads to a narrow individualism and the loss of hope; it gives rise to a sadness that lodges in the heart and brings forth fruits of discontent and intolerance. (SNC 9)

Hope, as a fundamental human need, demands the transcendence of temporal limits. Its absence results not only in personal sadness and anxiety but also in the erosion of social bonds. In such a world, as Francis points out, it becomes easy to reject the weakest and to obscure the Gospel vision of the human person: “Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a ‘throw away’ culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about

exploitation and oppression, but something new. The excluded are not the ‘exploited’ but the outcast, the ‘leftovers.’” (*EG* 53) One of the most affected environments in which the effects of the crisis of hope are observed is the world of youth. Pope Francis notes, “Yet it is sad to see young people who are without hope. . . . Without the hope that their dreams can come true, they will inevitably grow discouraged and listless.” (*SNC* 12) Many young people are disoriented and disheartened. The Church wants to walk with them, because she knows that they carry within them the hope of the future: “Anyone called to be a parent, pastor or guide to young people must have the farsightedness to appreciate the little flame that continues to burn, the fragile reed that is shaken but not broken (cf. *Is* 42:3). The ability to discern pathways where others only see walls, to recognize potential where others see only peril.” (*ChV* 67) Elsewhere: “And above all, dream! Do not be afraid to dream. Dream! Dream of a world which cannot yet be seen, but which will surely arrive. Hope leads us to believe in the existence of a creation which expands until the definitive fulfillment, when God will be everything in everyone.” (Francis 2017b) This can be interpreted as an expression of spiritual homelessness—a condition in which young people, deprived of support in absolute values, drift toward nihilism. In this perspective, the present does not appear as a space of potential fulfillment but rather as a time of withdrawal from the recognition of truth and the hope it brings. In a world dominated by nihilism, as Bruno Forte notes, not only is the motivation to seek the truth lost, but even the will to search for meaning disappears:

It is a time of fragmentation and collapse, of darkness and night, a time of poverty in which indifference becomes a deadly disease, and the rightful rejection of coercive and totalitarian ideological perspectives has led to a renunciation of the very question of meaning, to the point of losing the desire to search for the fundamental reasons for human life and death. (Forte 2005, 17)

In such a context, life loses its teleological dimension and is reduced to the pursuit of the “lowest” sensations, to the satisfaction of immediate needs. Hope becomes unattainable because the absence of purpose, truth, and meaning renders any orientation toward the future impossible. In this sense, nihilism is not merely intellectual doubt but spiritual paralysis. This stance points to the spiritual depth of hope—not as the expectation of changes in external conditions but as faithful perseverance in one’s identity, even if the world rejects it. In times of spiritual disorientation, hope takes the form of inward rootedness—identity becomes the “place of survival.” This is a kind of “theology of belonging and memory,” in which hope does not so much affirm the good as it opposes evil. Thus, the deeply ethical and heroic dimension of hope is revealed: it is “action in darkness,” which finds no support in facts but only in fidelity to conscience and tradition. It is a “metaphysical memory”—an echo of fullness that prevents the human person from dissolving into nothingness. Even if

one consciously cuts oneself off from the source of meaning, one still bears its trace within. In this view, hope is therefore neither a luxury nor an emotion reserved for extraordinary moments. It is a fundamental force of resistance to disintegration. It is not so much the affirmation of the good as the persistent perseverance in humanity—even against the visible signs of its presence. In a world where everything seems as meaningful as it is meaningless, hope appears as the last bastion of truth about the human being.

## 5.2. Educating for Hope

Contemporary reflection on education in the context of hope demands a departure from utilitarian and instrumental models of pedagogy. Hope appears not only as an emotion or theological virtue but as a cultural and pedagogical force, capable of creating spaces for communal action that transcend the logic of systems and institutions. From this perspective, the Church should not be perceived as a closed normative system but as a “community of hope”—a dynamic life space in which “being together” becomes a creative and renewing act (Arendt 1958). Arendt emphasizes that education is closely tied to the idea of beginning, to the possibility of continuously renewing the world. In *The Human Condition*, she writes, “Only because each human being is born he is an initium, a newcomer and therefore we can take the initiative, become beginners and set something in motion.” (Arendt 1958, 215f) Thus, as she further stresses, “since each person is a new beginning, education must be a preparation for that newness—not merely a repetition of what was.” Every birth is a political event, as it “introduces a new beginning.” A child is not merely a passive recipient of content—it is a potential initiator, a participant in the transformation of reality. Here, hope emerges as an essential dimension of freedom, agency, and the capacity to act, which need not be determined by the past. Such an approach to education presupposes not merely the transmission of information but the creation of a space in which the emergence of new meaning becomes possible. Paul Fairfield points to the paradoxical yet crucial difficulty in educational reflection:

What is decisive in education may well be the most elusive to reflection. We turn to the theory of education in order to clarify and gain critical perspective on the practice, but when the practical business of teaching and learning is not only complex but exceedingly so, clarity can be far seek, not least because the matter of which we are speaking is at once tangible and intangible. (Fairfield 2010, 1)

This quotation highlights the deep, often hidden layer of education, which cannot be fully captured in terms of functional or procedural analysis. Pedagogical reflection, when conducted in the horizon of hope, does not reduce itself to the mechanical planning of processes but becomes a hermeneutic openness to new possibilities

of understanding. In this view, education resembles an “art”—a creative and contemplative act that draws participants beyond the boundaries of the everyday toward a deeper perception of reality. The hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer offers a key insight in this regard: “To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand—not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion.” (Gadamer 2004, 304) He shows that the understanding subject transcends the horizon that seemed to be the only necessary and sufficient living space in order to perceive and interpret everything henceforth from a new, expanded perspective. Thus, education for hope is not a simple lesson in waiting for a “better tomorrow” but a deeply cultural and existential act that introduces the learner into a new understanding of self and world. It is not about escapism or consolation but about rooting in the truth that enables the transformation of reality. Hope here is not an emotion but an attitude that opens toward what is possible—even when current conditions contradict it.

## 6. The Ultimate Horizon of Hope

### 6.1. Hope as the Meaning and Goal of Life: Virtue, Protest, and Presence

*In their inseparable unity, hope is the virtue that, so to speak, gives inward direction and purpose to the life of believers. (SNC 18)*

Christian hope is inherently eschatological. It is not limited to the anticipation of a future event but lives within the perspective of a promised fulfillment that is not a projection of human desire but a horizon granted by God’s initiative. This hope, therefore, is not an illusory expectation but a faith-rooted openness to a reality that transcends human capabilities and intentions. Moltmann writes, “Hope is nothing else than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been truly promised by God.” (Moltmann 1967, 20) In this view, hope does not signify passive waiting but a dynamic life in history, characterized by openness to its potential transformation by God. It implies that Christian hope is an act of resistance against “the world as it is,” because it is grounded in trust toward “the world as it will be.”

In this way, hope becomes a critical force; it does not settle for the current state of affairs but directs the gaze toward a future that is promised, not constructed by man. The eschatological orientation of hope leads to a reformulation of the understanding of Christian life. Ethical action, prayer, and even suffering are no longer interpreted as isolated episodes but as loci of “divine intrusion” and “expectation”—as events in which the transcendent presence of God is expressed. Within this context, the notion of *intellectus spei*—the understanding of hope—emerges as a theological disposition that allows the believer to “inhabit the present” with eyes fixed on

a horizon not of their own making but given as a promise. Such hope, then, is not faith in a timetable but fidelity to a promise. As Moltmann articulates, its eschatological character “is not confidence in a timetable but fidelity to a promise.” It is precisely here that *intellectus spei* gains particular significance: “it enables the human soul to trust when nothing is visible, to affirm meaning when meaning is not apparent.” Hope in this perspective becomes the capacity to perceive meaning where senses and reason find none—a capacity rooted not in the “obvious” but in the “promised.” Christian hope is neither an escape from reality nor naive optimism. It is a spiritual and intellectual position expressed as action in the “here and now” while remaining rooted in a reality that is yet to come. Hope as *intellectus spei* thus becomes a form of theological knowledge—a mode of inhabiting history with the deep conviction that God is faithful to His promise and that the final word belongs not to death but to life. Christian hope, as one of the three theological virtues, is a spiritual force that gives direction and meaning to human life. As Pope Francis notes, “in their inseparable unity, hope is the virtue that, so to speak, gives inward direction and purpose to the life of believers.” (SNC 18)

From this viewpoint, hope is not merely an emotional impulse but an interior disposition that enables a person to endure—even in extreme situations—not because the world appears friendly, but because there exists a deep, transcendent trust that it is not ultimate. Commenting on this reality, Pope Francis states that hope is not idea, it is something deeper: “Our hope is not a concept; it is not an emotion, it is not a mobile phone, it is not an accumulation of riches! Our hope is a Person.” (Francis 2017a) Hope is thus like an anchor that holds human existence within the order of meaning—even when that meaning is not immediately perceptible. It is not a project of the future but a spiritual act of the present—an inner “yes” spoken to a world not fully understood but not abandoned. Hope, as a spiritual and existential gesture, differs fundamentally from optimism. As Terry Eagleton notes, optimism is a superficial disposition, often detached from reality and blind to suffering. It is a stance typical of the privileged, as it denies the need for change. “Optimism,” the philosopher writes, “is the favored outlook of the powerful, since it denies the need for change.” (Eagleton 2015, 21) In contrast, hope is born from the recognition of contingency, tragedy, and the irreversibility of suffering. It does not require certainty—an awareness of fragility suffices. As he notes, “As long as there is contingency, there is the possibility of permanent failure.” (Eagleton 2015, 21) Hope, therefore, does not begin with assurance but with the acceptance of the fragile and unpredictable human condition. This fundamental difference makes it possible to understand hope also as a form of protest—not so much against the world as such but against its interpretation as meaningless, closed, and final. Hope, even if it brings no guaranteed reward, remains a spiritual dissent from the disintegration of meaning. It is an attitude of openness to what is new, to the transgression of limits, to the creation of relationships and freedom, whose source is not solely human but also transcendent.

In this context, one can recall the figure of Mary, who “belonged and belongs to those people who have enough faith and imagination to receive everything that happens to them as a word of God addressed to them and enough courage to respond without hesitation with their whole being.” (Węclawski 2003, 11–12) The Marian attitude is an example of radical hope, based not on guarantees but on openness and trust in God, who speaks even through ambiguity and risk. Hope is not a psychological mechanism nor a projection of wishful thinking. It is a virtue that shapes existence at its deepest level. It is the spiritual dimension of life that enables not only survival but also the attribution of meaning to that which seems senseless. Hope as *virtus* does not so much promise the future as it helps the faithful and courageous inhabiting of the present, with eyes fixed not on the obvious but on the possible.

## 6.2. Eternal Life—The Ultimate Content of Hope

Christian hope finds its full expression in reference to eternal life. This constitutes its ultimate meaning and goal, not as an escape from temporality but as its fulfillment, transition, and transformation in the light of Christ’s resurrection. As Francis emphasizes, “so our faith professes. Christian hope finds in these words an essential foundation. For hope is ‘that theological virtue by which we desire. . . eternal life as our happiness.’” (SNC 19) Eternal life, therefore, is not merely the continuation of what is known and present but a radical transformation of existence in its fullness—*vita mutatur, non tollitur*, “life is changed, not ended.” (SNC 20) Christian hope transcends the horizon of death, granting it a new meaning. In the face of the end of earthly existence, hope is not nullified—on the contrary, it is deepened. Death is not, therefore, an absolute terminus but a threshold leading to a new reality. Hope enables a person to experience even the moment of death as a moment of surrender to the One who is Life. Węclawski emphasizes that the future—particularly the human future—does not fall under human control. God is our future. He writes:

Let us note that the future in general, and even more so the human future of something or someone, in no way falls under our power. Before us is God. God is before us. He is our future. That is why there is no boundary beyond which someone’s existence could no longer be human—in God it has an unconditional future. Therefore, thanks to God, I can hope that even where I can no longer have any control over my life—in the hour of my death—I will remain human. (Węclawski 2003, 9)

In this perspective, hope does not cease to be dynamic. Life does not end statically but “always continues—perhaps with my joy, but in any case each time differently!—God is waiting for me: precisely for this reason my future always turns out to be truly different than I thought when making this or that choice.” (Węclawski 2003, 9) The choices made in time are not indifferent to eternity—yet eternity is not their

mere continuation but their full revelation and fulfillment. The Church proclaims that the resurrection is not only a past event but possesses a living power that permeates the world: “Christ’s resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated this world.” (EG 276) In this sense, eternal life does not begin only after death but influences the way one lives, decides, and loves. This “life changed, not ended” thus becomes not only an eschatological expectation but also a present hope inscribed in everyday existence. Christian hope in eternal life does not mean an escape from reality but its most profound fulfillment. It is an answer to the question of the ultimate meaning of being human—even in the face of death. Through it, one can be certain that humanity will never be taken away but will be transformed in communion with the One who gives life.

### 6.3. Judgment as Fulfillment—Hope for Justice and Mercy

*We should indeed prepare ourselves consciously and soberly for the moment when our lives will be judged, but we must always do this from the standpoint of hope, the theological virtue that sustains our lives and shields them from groundless fear. (SNC 22)*

In Christian anthropology and eschatology, the Last Judgment does not appear solely as an act of condemnation or punishment but as fulfillment—a moment in which the human person encounters God in truth, justice, and mercy. In this perspective, judgment becomes not so much a reason for fear as a place of hope. Hope, as a theological virtue, protects against paralyzing fear and enables an existential openness to God’s presence, even in the hour of judgment. The Church does not perceive God’s judgment as something detached from divine mercy. On the contrary, mercy is the context and the light within which God’s recognition of the truth about the human being takes place. As Pope Francis proclaims, “We have to put mercy before judgment, and in any event God’s judgement will always be in the light of his mercy.” (Francis 2018c) Elsewhere:

There the God who is wounded by love comes to meet our wounds. He makes our wretched wounds like his own glorious wounds. There is a transformation: my wretched wounds resemble his glorious wounds. Because he is mercy and works wonders in our wretchedness. Let us today, like Thomas, implore the grace to acknowledge our God: to find in his forgiveness our joy, and to find in his mercy our hope. (Francis 2018d)

Mercy does not negate justice but transcends it, granting it a salvific dimension. In this sense, judgment does not mean merely the unmasking of human guilt but, above all, the revelation of God’s merciful action toward the entirety of human history. In the eschatological context, hope thus plays not only a psychological role but also an ontological one—it is a response to a reality in which judgment does not

annihilate the person but enables them to stand in the light of truth without despair. Hope in the face of judgment is not the result of self-confidence but the fruit of trust in God, who “knows the human heart” and does not reject it but lifts it up. Mercy becomes the space in which hope not only endures but grows—even where the person experiences the limits of their own freedom and responsibility. Therefore, judgment as fulfillment means a moment in which both justice and mercy reveal their deepest meaning. It is a time of truth: the truth revealed in love. In this horizon, Christian hope is not an escape from responsibility but allows one to live it in the light of salvation, which does not destroy but ultimately transforms.

## 7. Conclusion: Hope as the Wisdom of Uncertainty

Christian hope is not merely an emotional or mental state—it is a form of life. It constitutes an existential stance that enables one to live within the reality of uncertainty without succumbing to its destructive force. Christian hope is a form of life. To live by *intellectus spei* is to act according to the reality of God’s promise, even when empirical evidence is lacking. It is to forgive when reconciliation seems impossible. Hope makes it so that if the “unforgivable” exists, it is the only thing that truly requires forgiveness: “forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable.” (Derrida 2001, 32) Hope does not wait for favorable conditions but acts despite their absence. It transcends both paralyzing skepticism and facile religious self-assurance—it becomes the “wisdom of uncertainty.” Such an attitude does not offer an escape from history or from reality. On the contrary, it calls one to enter more deeply into history, not armed with the weapon of certainty, but with the courage of trust. Hope does not ignore suffering, lack, or chaos—it enters into them with the conviction that history does not belong solely to the forces of destruction but also to the promise God makes to humanity. In this sense, *intellectus spei*, as Ricoeur points out, is an “understanding that surpasses technical rationality”—a kind of understanding that does not stop at what is predictable but opens itself to what is new and unexpected. It is an understanding rooted not in calculation but in imagination and fidelity—in the capacity to embrace what has not yet arrived but already constitutes the meaning of action. Hope, rooted in uncertainty, does not surrender to it—on the contrary, it transforms it into a space of responsible and creative engagement. In this sense, hope becomes a kind of hermeneutics: a reading of life from the perspective of a meaning not yet known but to be revealed.

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