



Reflection from Fr. Garry Richmeier

I recently saw a meme on Facebook that caught my attention. It was a photograph of a rather evil-looking clown pointing out something to another, less evil-looking clown. The caption read "2023 showing 2024 around the workplace." That meme would fit under the motto "It's better to laugh at troubles than to cry."

At the beginning of each new year, people usually envision all the wonderful possibilities that the new year might have in store. It's a time for outlining our hopes and dreams for the future, and making commitments (resolutions) to make things better. It may just be me, but this year seems different. I hear people (and the media) talking about things getting worse rather than better. For example, people talk about the upcoming election as being crazier and even more divisive than the last two elections. And there is no one suggesting that the political parties in Congress will even come close to working together in the coming year. Most commentators discussing the wars going on in the Ukraine and the Middle East conclude that it will only get worse, drawing other countries into the wars. And of course the dire predictions regarding climate change and the refusal of many countries to effectively address it does not bode well for our future. Hope for the future seems hard to come by these days.

We who call ourselves Christian are supposed to be people of hope, trusting that God's plan is at work in our world. So how are we to hold on to hope when we are inundated with so much chaos, violence, hate, suffering, and general apathy? One strategy is to once in a while remind ourselves of the big picture. There has always been hate, suffering, and war as long as humans have been on this planet, yet we are still here and God is at work. There are no guarantees of course, but we will probably still be here in the future. The big picture includes recognizing that although many things are pretty awful, some things are better today than they used to be. One example is racism. It still exists, but today we can talk about it openly, point it out when we see it, and we have passed some laws outlawing discrimination in some areas. Something else we can do to hold on to hope is highlight the many voices calling for change. One such person who comes to mind for me is Greta Thunberg, the young Swedish activist who calls for action in reducing global warming. And maybe the most effective way to cultivate hope for the future is by doing something(s) that will make the future more like what we want it to be. This reminds me of another Facebook meme I ran across. One character looks like he's working in the garden, while another character asks "Aren't you terrified of what 2024 could be like? Everything is so messed up!" The gardener says "I think it will bring flowers." "YES? WHY?" the other one asks. "Because I'm planting flowers" responds the gardener.

Whether we are in the worst of times or the best of times, our job remains the same -- planting the seeds of peace, respect, compassion, and love, trusting that God will allow those seeds to flower in God's own time.

Peace,

Fr. Garry