

## Candle for Peace, Hope and Justice

**HOPE.** The advent candle we light today is the candle of hope. We also light our peace, HOPE and justice candle. Daily Maverick's Gathering on Thursday had **HOPE** as its theme and it was so inspiring to hear the dedication to finding solutions by some of the true leaders of this country. When we think back on all the candle prayers and happenings of this year I wonder what levels of hope we carry within us? Does the word still form part of our everyday vocabulary? Questions like these got me picking up Rebecca Solnit's book "Hope in the Dark" again to get some perspective. She quotes Vaclav Havel, a Czechoslovakian playwright, poet and activist in the late 70s and 80s who was jailed for his activism. A remarkable man who became the first democratically elected president of the Czech Republic after the fall of communism. He had this to say about hope whilst still in prison: *"the kind of hope I often think about (especially in situations that are particularly hopeless, such as prison) I understand above all as a state of mind, not a state of the world. Either we have hope within us or we don't: it is a dimension of the soul: it's not essentially dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation...It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart... Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but, rather, an ability to work for something because it is good, (an ability to work for something because it is good) not just because it stands a chance to succeed."*

Please pray with me...

Jesus, what can be said to add to that? You so exemplify the bringing of that kind of hope to our lives, to our country, to our world. You brought an invitation to join you to work for something that is good. You offered those around you the slow unfolding truth that you had come to turn things around. Not as was expected through the destruction of the ruling party but through an approach that offered a new standard of living based on love, justice and mercy...a way that challenged and exposed the ruling party. A way that would not settle just to see the corrupt held accountable but to see them changed by these new ways of being.

We balk at this, Jesus, this kind of restorative hope. It requires so much more from us, and we confess that we have ceased to be people of hope and have become rather, people of despair...people of despair because in many ways it is easier. It is easier to grumble and pull apart than to engage our imaginations and seek creative solutions. It is easier to leave the work to the activists than to engage creatively in our own work-spaces and neighbourhoods and further. There was never any respite for you in this and there needs to be no respite for us. Solnit reminds us that life, by its very nature, will always require people of hope. May we see beyond what is to what could be. We seem to have lost our way. Please forgive us. But don't only forgive us...hold us accountable.

We pray that we might take our lead from hope-livers in situations where from the outside it would appear there is no hope. May we pay close attention to the stories that emerge from spaces we would fear to enter; to learn what living hopefully looks like...because, in all honesty, many of us have not lived hopelessly enough to allow life-giving hopefulness to be born. We have so much to learn.

And so may this advent time, this time of you coming to bring hope...true hope... startle and astound us into being more deeply the hope-livers you had in mind. Amen.