

CHRIST OUR HOPE

**A Parish Study Guide To
Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical Letter**

On Christian Hope (Spe salvi)

**A Catechetical Resource of the
Archdiocese of Washington
In Preparation for the Apostolic Visit of**

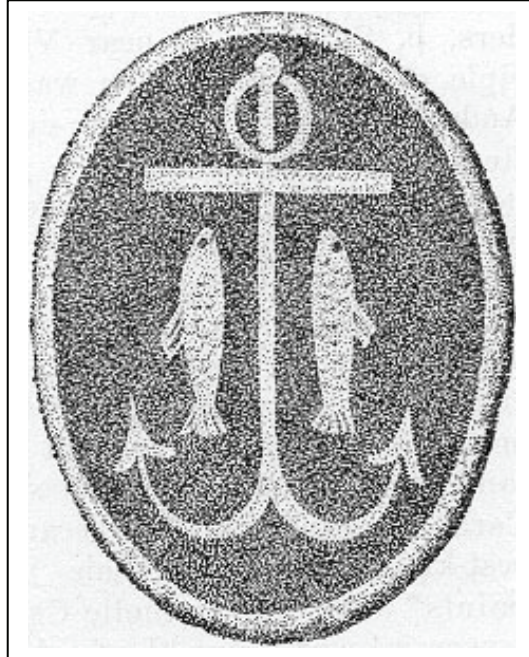
Pope Benedict XVI

**to Washington, DC
April 15 – 17, 2008**

“It is in fact the task of every Bishop to proclaim hope to the world, hope based on the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: a hope "which not only concerns penultimate matters but also and above all that eschatological hope which awaits the riches of the glory of God (cf. *Eph* 1:18), which surpasses anything that the human heart has ever conceived (cf. *1 Cor* 2:9), and to which the sufferings of the present cannot be compared (cf. *Rom* 8:18)". A stance of theological hope, together with faith and love, must completely shape the Bishop's pastoral ministry.

The Bishop is called in a particular way to be a prophet, witness and servant of hope. He has the duty of instilling confidence and proclaiming before all people the basis of Christian hope (cf. *1 Pet* 3:15). The Bishop is the prophet, witness and servant of this hope, especially where a culture of "the here and now" leaves no room for openness to transcendence. Where hope is absent, faith itself is called into question. Love too is weakened by the loss of this virtue. Especially in times of growing unbelief and indifference, hope is a stalwart support for faith and an effective incentive for love. It draws its strength from the certainty of God's desire for the salvation of all people (cf. *1 Tim* 2:4) and from the constant presence of the Lord Jesus, the *Emmanuel* who remains with us always, until the end of the world (cf. *Mt* 28:20).”

*Pastores Gregis, On the Bishop,
Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World,
Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, October 2003*



**The anchor was one of the most popular
early Christian symbols of hope.
The anchor is found in early Christian catacombs
and on seals and rings.
This symbol of hope is based on the
teaching of Scripture concerning:
“the hope set before us...
a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.”
(Hebrews 6: 18-19)**

INTRODUCTION

Pope Benedict XVI's upcoming apostolic journey to the United States will soon capture the attention of millions of people in this country and around the world. How will we, the faithful of the Archdiocese of Washington, prepare ourselves spiritually for this moment of grace when the successor of Saint Peter comes among us? How can we prepare our hearts and minds to better hear and fully live the message of hope the Holy Father brings?

Christ Our Hope is a Parish Study Guide offered to the faithful of the Archdiocese of Washington to assist in our spiritual preparations - as individuals, as a family, as a parish community, and as a diocese - for the upcoming papal visit.

This Study Guide is based on Pope Benedict XVI's most recent encyclical letter *On Christian Hope (Spe salvi)* and builds on the theme of the April 15-20, 2008 papal visit to America, which is, *Christ Our Hope*.

The Study Guide is ideal for use by pastors, families, couples, young adults, bible study, adult faith sharing, RCIA, and other parish groups. There are **SEVEN** sessions with outlines for each session containing the following components:

- ❖ Opening Prayer and Scripture Readings
- ❖ Catechesis of Themes and Quotes from *Spe salvi*
- ❖ Space for personal reflection notes
- ❖ Group Discussion Questions and Additional Suggested Readings

The papal encyclical *Spe salvi* is hereafter referred to as **SS**

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as **CCC**

The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* as **USCCA**

Author: *Jem Sullivan, Ph.D.* is Adjunct Professor in the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception at the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, D.C., where she teaches courses on Catholic Education and the Documents of Vatican II and writes for a variety of Catholic publications as a catechetical consultant. Her most recent publication is a Study Guide to the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults from *Our Sunday Visitor*.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

Answers to a few basic questions

Why should I avail of this Study Guide, *Christ Our Hope*?

The Apostolic Visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Washington DC will be an extraordinary occasion of grace for this Archdiocese. As the successor of Saint Peter, the Pope embodies the unity of the Catholic faith. So we come together united in prayer and in faith because we believe the Pope leads, teaches, and sanctifies the universal Church in a unique way.

“I would like to read the Pope’s latest encyclical on Christian hope, but I just don’t have the time!” “I’m not sure if I would understand the themes of *Spe salvi* if I tried to read it on my own.”

This Study Guide invites the faithful of this Archdiocese to reflect on the message of Christian hope that is the theme of the papal visit and the subject of the latest papal encyclical. By taking time to reflect on what it means to live by Christian hope, personally and as a community of faith, we come to know a profound unity of faith, hope and love. We also prepare to become, in turn, living witnesses to hope in our families, neighborhoods and in society.

What will I need to begin using this Study Guide?

Along with this Study Guide you will need a Bible and Pope Benedict’s XVI’s Encyclical Letter *Spe salvi* (www.vatican.va). You will also find in this resource quotes from the papal encyclical and references to the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults. This Study Guide is written in such a way that you can move easily between these various Church documents.

How many sessions will it take to complete this Study Guide?

There are **seven** sessions in this resource. It is recommended that the scheduling of sessions are planned in such a way that they lead up to Pope Benedict’s April 15–18 visit to Washington, DC.

Session One – What is Christian Hope?

Session Two – Hope Changes Everything

Session Three – Biblical Witness to Hope

Session Four – The Sacraments and Christian hope

Session Five – The Social Nature of Hope

Session Six – Prayer, Action, Suffering – Schools of Hope

Session Seven – Becoming Ministers of Hope to Others

What happens at each Study Session?

Before **Session One** members of the group are encouraged to read the **Introduction** and **How To Use This Study Guide** sections of this resource. The **FOCUS OF THIS SESSION** textbox on the cover page of each outline gives an overview of the main themes of that study session. Then the pastor or group leader uses the following outline to guide each session:

BEGIN each session with prayer (use recommended prayers or choose others) (5 minutes)

Invite one person to read the suggested Scripture passage given at the beginning of each session.

Allow for a few minutes of quiet recollection and reflection on the words of Scripture. This draws participants away from the distractions and burdens of the day and opens their hearts and minds to receiving God's word. (10 minutes)

CATECHESIS:

Begin the catechetical moment with an introduction based on the **Summary of Themes** from *Spe salvi*. (15 minutes)

Invite participants to **read** aloud **one or more** of the relevant passage(s) from *Spe salvi* excerpted for that theme (5 minutes)

Invite members of the group to share their personal insights and reflections on the **Summary of Themes** and the passage from *Spe salvi*. (20 minutes). Space for personal notes is provided in each session.

Participants share their reflections on the readings from *Spe salvi*. **Break** if time permits (5 minutes)

DISCUSSION:

Break into small groups to discuss suggested **Discussion Questions** based on the themes of *Spe salvi*. (15 minutes)

Discussion, whether in large or small groups, is an effective element of adult faith formation and serves to bridge faith and life, and the message of Christian hope and contemporary culture. Leaders ensure that all members of the group have an opportunity to share their reflections, insights, and questions.

CONCLUSION:

Briefly **Summarize** some of the main points that surface during the group discussion for that session. **Remind** participants of suggested readings in preparation for the following study session of *Spe salvi*.

Conclude the study session with the suggested **prayer, hymn, or scripture reading** found at the end of each session. (10 minutes)