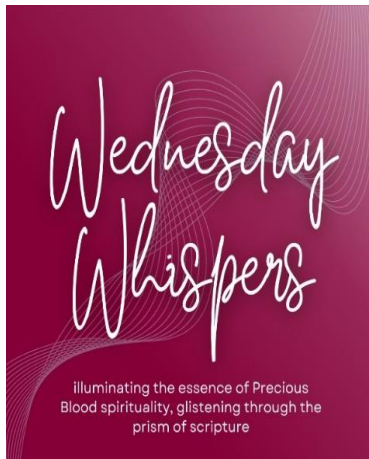


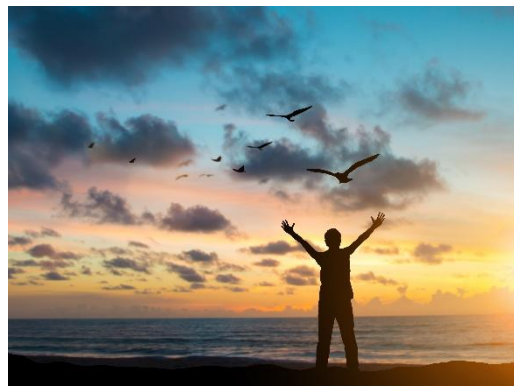


A weekly reflection by members
of the Precious Blood Community

November 19, 2025

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**“Spe Salvi Facti Sumus – In hope we were saved”
Pope Benedict**



“SPE SALVI facti sumus – in hope we were saved...” This is the opening line of Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical letter *Spe Salvi* written in late November of 2007 to a world filled with anxiety from the ongoing wars on terror and being on the precipice of economic downfall, among so many other things. Little did we know how prophetic this encyclical would come to be. Not only did our late Pope Francis, of blessed memory, open this Jubilee Year of Hope before he died, but it is a theme the world needs now more than ever before. I would daresay even more than in 2007.

I read this encyclical and was so profoundly moved that I said to myself, “Hmm...I have to be able to bring this into my youth programs somehow??..” Well, in my delusion of cleverness, I had the brilliant idea of making a high school Confirmation retreat revolve around this text as its theme. I assigned young adult and youth leaders from my ministry team to lead sessions based on some of the subthemes in the encyclical. Let’s just say it wasn’t as enthusiastically received as I had hoped! But, throughout the weeks of reading with my overwhelmed leaders, small nuggets of the text and seeing some of the points Pope Benedict makes, I encouraged them to simplify their ideas and search their own lives for ways in which Christ had given them hope in times when there was none.

What came from this, I did not expect. I saw my youth leaders really find their voice to share their testimonies and lead the teens in really thinking about their faith. One of the leaders, who for many years had only played a behind-the-scenes role and didn't talk very much, was now up in front of the group of 80+ teens leading a session about looking at our own woundedness and brokenness and inviting us to surrender these things to the Lord for healing. Another leader found the courage to share their story of attempted suicide while in high school, even showing us a picture of themselves in the hospital after one attempt, sharing the deep darkness and despair they were in before the love of Jesus through the youth ministry community really turned their life around; they are now attending UC Berkeley and recently published an article with Stanford! I even saw one leader who didn't feel confident they would do well in any particular role, refill the water dispensers throughout the day, quietly serving their peers with a heart full of charity. I immediately thought of St. Mother Teresa... "not all of us can do great things. But we can all do small things with great love."

This retreat really did what I hoped it would; it planted seeds of faith and hope in a bunch of teens who mostly didn't take their faith seriously. I was astounded to see almost all of them get up voluntarily to go to Confession when it was offered during retreat, and later on, one Mom, whom I had not met before, told me that it was really her twin daughters in the program that were bringing her back to church. I give thanks to God for these graces....and especially for the wonderful teen and young adult leaders on the ministry team who allowed themselves to be instruments of the Lord in ways they never had before. Reflecting on all of this, I can say confidently that the Church has a great reason to be hopeful.

Mario Castellanos serves as the Youth and Young Adult Coordinator at Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Fremont, CA. He is also a discernor with the Companions of the Precious Blood, Berkeley Group. To learn more about the Companions of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, [click here](#).

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