

Pope Benedict often makes the point that Jesus Christ is “the Kingdom of God in person” (*Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 188 et *passim*). Your assignment is to address the relationship between Christ, His Kingdom, and the theological virtue of hope, particularly in light of the encyclical *Spe Salvi*. In the course of your essay, address the following questions:

- (1) How is Christian hope different from modern ideas about “progress” (both social progress and “individual” progress)?
- (2) How exactly do the saints function as “theological fonts” in explicating the Christian Gospel of hope?
- (3) How compelling are Pope Benedict's suggestions about becoming “schooled in hope” outlined in *Spe Salvi*? In answering this question, talk about each of the three ‘settings for learning hope’, viz., (a) prayer, (b) action and suffering, and (c) final judgment.

In general, as you answer these questions, keep your focus on the following meta-question, which lies at the heart of *Spe Salvi*: How can a believer today live out effectively and personally the tension between the fact that the Kingdom has been initiated by Christ's coming in the flesh and the simultaneous fact that this Kingdom is so patently not present in its fullness?