

February 27, 2025

Daily Reflections



THE RADIANCE OF HOPE

By Julie Mussché

A Quote

Dear reader,

This reflection was published three years ago; over the last several months Etty has surfaced up in my reflections and held my attention during this Jubilee year of Hope.

“Never give up, never escape, take everything in, and perhaps suffer, that’s not too awful, but never, never give up.”

ETTY HILLESUM. AN INTERRUPTED LIFE: THE DIARIES OF ETTY HILLESUM, 1941-1943

Reflection

When considering the virtue of hope, the image of Etty Hillesum’s face usually surfaces up through my psyche. I always think about Etty tossing a postcard from the train as she and her family left Camp Westerbork on their way to

certain death, heading east toward Auschwitz. What compelled her to even consider, much less to do so such a thing? That for me is a powerful example of hope. Where does that depth of hope come from?

This strength of virtue has clarity and defies logical thought. It reveals possibilities in the face of inevitabilities. It sparks righteous effort. It is energized and nurtured by a grateful heart. As Merton offers, “Gratitude takes mothering for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder.” (*Thoughts in Solitude*) A posture of gratitude opens the heart to hope. Likewise, faith ultimately begets hope.

Here is the thing: Etty entered adulthood with considerable independence and opportunity. She was a bit of a “wild child” who went against the norm. She was Jewish although not particularly observant. She was 26 when the Nazis invaded the Netherlands. Slowly, personal freedoms, including the ability to work, shop, move about and intermingle, were restricted for Jews. At the same time, parallel with this harsh reality, Etty’s spiritual life developed and burgeoned.

She developed a deeply personal and intimate relationship with God. It seems as if the greater the threat and terror, the more Etty fell into the interior life and arms of God. “I feel safe in God’s arms ... and no matter whether I am sitting at the beloved old desk now, or in a bare room in the Jewish district, or perhaps in a labor camp under SS guards ... I shall always feel safe in God’s arms.” (Ibid, 11 July 1942) Wrapped in God’s arms, no wonder Etty had such a sense of hope. And perhaps I have forgotten one other quality buttressing hope: courage.



Radiance Light
Photo by Raphael Brasileiro

For Pondering

- What inspires hope in you?
- Consider a time when you felt wrapped in God's arms. Spend some time reflecting on that moment and the radiating Graces.

For Prayer

*"You have made me so rich, oh God,
please let me share Your beauty with open hands.
My life has become an uninterrupted dialogue with You, oh God,
one great dialogue.*

*At night, when I lie in my bed and rest in You, oh God,
tears of gratitude run down my face, and that is my prayer."*

ETTY HILLESUM, AUGUST 18, 1943

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