

## ***“Echoes of the Heart”***

*Reflections on Life and Community Living*

Contact Dr. Frantz on the web at [www.mlchurch.com](http://www.mlchurch.com)

**Through the eyes of hope.** With the holidays breaking upon us, it's a wild and crazy time. We can sort of *feel* it in the air. The pace picks up. Little by little, the pressure builds ... to the inevitable point where we have less and less discretionary time.

To make it through this festive time of year, we have to do some serious planning; we have to prepare ourselves and get organized.

Trying to stay on top of things throughout the holidays is important if we're going to take advantage of the offerings of the spirit through the season. If we're forever harried and exhausted at the day's end, where's the time and occasion for reflection?

More than anything, Christmas is about the rekindling of hope. Signs of improbability sound throughout the Christmas story. Joseph and Mary struggle mightily along the way to the *Bethlehem* birth. Still, every year, the story is retold—of an infant born in a humble manger—and we're invited to embrace the world *through the eyes of hope*.

Always, it seems, there is so much in life that takes the legs of hope out from underneath us. The tragic death of former Miami Hurricane football star, Sean Taylor, cut down at such an early age in *yet one more* mindless act of violence. The ongoing war in Iraq, where—daily—innocent people on all sides lose their lives, leaving their anguished families reeling in pain and loss.

For more than a fleeting moment—we hope—expectation rises up in the Annapolis Summit (in Annapolis, Maryland) being convened to unravel a *roadmap* for peace in the Middle East, as both Israelis and Palestinians seek a most unlikely rapprochement of historical differences and remembered grievances.

In the midst of it all, we're reminded of the importance of seeing our lives *through the eyes of hope*.

**Hope changes the way we see things.** The key to hope is to be able to imagine a changed world—a renewed relationship, a transformed personal identity, a new spiritual direction. What the mind can imagine (with a dose of realism), the body and spirit can achieve.

Hope can *see* a faltering marriage renewed. Hope can *see* a strained relationship with son or daughter restored. Hope can *see* Israeli and Palestinian living side by side. Why? Because hope invites us to *see* the world in terms of possibilities; and it continually seeks to illumine the best in the human spirit.

Of course for hope to become realized in actual deeds, love must show the way. In all of our relations, love is the life-blood of our highest hopes. Love dares to see the *big*

*picture* of our lives. The *big picture* has to do with consequences and the enduring *meanings* we want reflected in our lives as the light begins to dim on our life journey.

How do we want to feel about ourselves and our most cherished loved ones ten, twenty or fifty years from now?

**The hope we project changes others.** Don't we all enjoy being in the presence of *hopeful* people—people who have a positive disposition and spirit about them? The hope we bring to our daily living makes a difference in the lives of those with whom we interact. Over time, it becomes contagious.

When we *see* situations and other people *through the eyes of hope*, the sheer energy and spirit of the hope is uplifting and invigorating. It makes us feel like we can meet the challenges that are before us; that we can be successful on the job or in a new hobby; or re-energize or re-direct a key relationship.

One of the timeless blessings of the Christmas story is the hope it continues to ignite in the hearts of people everywhere. Symbolically, the birth of a child overflows with hope. Hope that the *promise* of the newborn can take us to places we've never been but need to go.

Wherever there is *promise* and *hope*, new life abounds. In our marriages and in our families; in our communities and in the wider world. Let *hope* come, and let us choose—every day—to see our todays and our tomorrows through its glow!