

## Magnificent Hope

While Obama's White House shimmered in rainbow hues, while 'the wicked freely strutted about because what is vile ('gay marriage') was honored among men' (PS 12:8), faithful men and women gathered in Lancaster PA for the fourth annual Restored Hope Network Conference.

Hope fell on us like morning mist; it rained on a people leveled by the afflicting news that America had bent her knee to Baal as never before. We cried for our land and we cried for the God who had been faithful to the land, He whose merciful heart we betrayed.

And we cried tears of gratitude that we received the bitter news together. We were not alone: hope welled up in persons espoused to merciful Jesus in their same-sex attraction, parents and friends of 'gay'-identified loved ones who love them too much to agree with their choices, godly counselors and pastors intent on championing the homosexually vulnerable onto chaste self-giving. In our brothers and sisters, we witnessed the Resurrected Christ. Exiled yes, but not forsaken. We have each other.

The Supreme Court declared its decision at the precise moment that Christopher West delivered one of the most magnificent talks I have ever heard: how our bodies and sexual desires disclose the cry of the cosmos for union, a bond fundamentally about spousal union with our God and chaste relating with each other, man and woman made in His image for passionate, creative, joyful living. West mentored me in my Catholic conversion; I respect him more than almost any other and I delighted that many of my RHN colleagues, mostly evangelical, reveled in his dynamic translation of St. John Paul's teaching as much as I did.

Rob Gagnon summoned for us the same hope that sustained St. Paul in his multiple distresses, a hope that matures in us only through affliction. By granting us a New Testament perspective on how the Gospel shines brighter in darkness than in presumed light, Rob inspired us for the battle at hand.

Most hopeful of all were the stories of men and women captivated by the darkness of 'gay' and 'tran' selves and the earthy, holy, persistent love of Jesus and His members that set each free. A former drug and 'gay' sex addict, Ron Citlau is now a Reformed senior pastor, father of four, and champion of the homosexually broken in his denomination and beyond; he preached powerfully of the divine intimacy that became his hope. That hope now empowers every word he speaks. After his message, he gave two simple words: hope and power. Most of us rushed the altar where prayer ministers administered the Spirit of hope. The One who always seeks the lowest, driest ground in us filled us to overflowing.

Let hope abound as never before.

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow

with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.' (Rom. 15:13)