

On Thursday of this week our Holy Father, Pope Francis, called the country of Panama, where World Youth Day is now being celebrated, to be a “hub of hope!” Now, he did not know that we are celebrating our Khaki and Plaid Gala for our own Catholic Schools tonight, nor does he know that our way of helping our schools is called “Hope for the Future,” but I like to think that maybe the Holy Spirit has been at work with him and with us as our Khaki and Plaid Gala and World Youth Day celebrations coincide!

What does it mean to be a “hub of hope?” Well, first, a hub is something that is in the middle, a strong center that holds together many different parts. A wheel could turn and at the same time hold up a car or truck unless there was a strong hub at the center. The hub receives the pressures of the various weights pushing against it, and at the same time allows that pressure to be turned into something good, that allows the wheel to turn. Therefore, to be a “hub of hope,” means to be a center of hope, where many needs and pressures converge, and yet these very needs and pressures get turned into a dynamic energy allowing the wheel to turn and for things to move forward!

Hope is not the same as wishful thinking. Wishful thinking is not based in reality. I might wish that the Church was perfect, but it is not. I might wish that I would win the lottery tomorrow, but I probably won't! I might wish that things would never have problems, but that's not the real world. Hope, on the other hand, takes reality as it is, squarely, and looks to the grace of God and His vision of the future. Hope works with God's grace to create something new in accord

**with God's will. Hope also waits upon the Lord God, Who has promised to be with us and guide us! Hope looks to the horizon, even in the dark night, trusting that the sun will arise!**

**When the Holy Father is calling us to be a "hub of hope," he is not calling us to be wishful thinkers, but rather, he is calling us to be cooperators with the grace of God! He is reminding us that we are called to be co-laborers with His gracious plan where even the poorest and neediest are looked after, welcomed, healed, and offered new opportunities!**

**This is especially important for our youth. In a time when so many of our social institutions seem to be under attack, where there is so much conflict and confusion, and where even the Church has had to humbly acknowledge her own faults, we need "hubs of hope!" And we can be hubs of hope right here, right now, in our Archdiocese of San Antonio! Tonight, as we celebrate the Khaki and Plaid Gala, we are offering hope for the future for thousands of children who otherwise could not receive a Catholic education. We are hubs of hope for the dozens of teachers, administrators, and service personnel who make our schools work and who want to fulfill their own calling to be hope for the children they educate and serve. We are helping the Church, itself, to truly be the Church of Hope, where people of many different backgrounds and needs can encounter each other in love and openness, creating new futures of possibility and experiencing the meaning of God's grace.**

**My brothers and sisters, I thank you for being here tonight. I thank you for your generosity. On behalf of a future generation who**

**will carry the message of God’s vision for the world because of their Catholic education, I thank you! You are “hubs of hope” tonight — may ever be hubs of hope in the lives of many for years to come! God bless you and be with you.**