

We are so delighted to have you with us this evening to celebrate and be blessed with so much wisdom and joy. From Julianne Stanz. She is a nationally known speaker and author and amazing storyteller, and most recently she served as director of Parish life and evangelization and as a consultant to the USCCB committee on Catechesis and Evangelization. She's currently taking a break from that and is working with Loyola Press as a consultant. And there's a piece about Julianne that just warms my heart. Many, many years ago we, I picked her up and had a chai tea latte for her ready to go for some diocesan event we were doing, and she just automatically just warmed my heart and we have become special friends. And so it's just such a treat to have here tonight. And so welcome. We're going to start with a song. Merrick's going to lead us in a song and then Julianne will come on up and share her wonderful wisdom with us. Thank you.

Is it okay if I stand down here versus up there? Okay, good. I like to be close to people so that we can huddle together and converse and chat like we're having a cup of tea by a fire in Ireland. It is okay if you have no Irish ancestry or relations. I promise I'm not going to go on and on and on and on and on about Ireland tonight, but I will definitely share part of my journey with you so that you can go forward filled with hope. And I want to thank you for being here tonight. I know the weather is bad. Someone's like, yeah, I'm going to be watching on the live stream tonight because people drive crazy in the rain out here. And I thought, sister, let me bring you to Ireland where they speed on these little tiny roads and there's hedges and cliffs on either side, but I'm grateful to be here in the rain with you and so very grateful for the warm welcome that you have given me and that I've received from your pastors and from the staff here. We're going to talk about hope tonight and I'll share a little bit of my journey with you. But when we talk about hope, there's four things we're going to be talking about for the next three nights, and I am going to give you some time tonight to also ask me questions. So I want you to think about, it can be related to what I'm talking about. It can be very random. Like a question I had over the weekend was, what's your favorite tea?

Which is great Irish breakfast of course. So is it not English breakfast? We are Irish, but I do have an English dad. I'll tell you a little bit about myself first and I'm going to warm up a little bit and I'm going to intersperse prayer through these nights because our theme of hope has four access points or four seed healing, openness, prayer, and Eucharist, right? Hope has four components, healing, openness, being people of prayer and being people of the Eucharist. And in this year of the Eucharistic revival, we're going to unpack those seeds for each other. So let's just take a moment to thank the Lord for all the gifts that he has given us and to allow his presence to fall upon us tonight. Let's take a breath and sign ourselves with the sacred side of our faith. In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Lord, we ask that your presence fall upon us here tonight, that you would be with us and make yourself known in the hearts of all who are gathered here tonight and those who are watching on live stream, those who watch now and those who will watch later, gather us as your people. Lord, fill us with your hope, send your healing into our hearts. Allow us to be open to your word and to your Holy Spirit. Guide us as people of prayer so that we can be truly nourished in the body and blood your soul and divinity in the Eucharist. We ask this in your most precious and holy name, save Monica, pray for us. Name the Father and the Son the Holy Spirit. Amen. I grew up in a very small village in Ireland where everybody knew everybody's business. My mother is the youngest of 15 and I have 67 first cousins.

So I got away with precisely no mischief growing up because someone from my family would always snitch on me. And I learned very quickly that snitches get stitches in our family. The fighting Irish, the village that I'm from is, it's called Hackettstown. It's technically in Carlo, but it's in the mountains. And the area where I grew up was very much defined by the presence of our church in the same way that I think St. Monica's community defines this area. When I was doing research on your community, I went all the way back and looked at Monsignor Kali's life as such inspiration. And it led me to a movie who can name the movie going my way. And I watched it and I watched that scene with Bing Crosby where he comes in and he's wearing his sweatpants and the senior pastor is sitting there and said, Lord, have mercy.

Is this what they're sending me these days for a priest? And I thought, but then there's this lovely image of Bing Crosby as a priest going out onto the street and playing baseball with the kids. And today as I walked around the parish and I saw signs of life in your community, I thought children with a basketball, there was a birthday party for little Guss, I think his name is, yeah, today. And there was a RA happening, and I saw Monsignor who seemed to be everywhere today, by the way, like I was at Mass earlier today. And all of a sudden he pops, he's sitting over here, and then I look again and he's over there. Apparently he has perfected the ability of many saints to bi locate, which is a skill. As a mother, I really wish I had to be in two places at once.

So I grew up in this very small village, and the rhythm of my life in Ireland was very much given to me by the practices of my faith and our family and our community around me. My grandmother, when she was baking the bread, which I would say to her, what's the recipe? And she'd say, it's a little bit of this and a little bit of that, right? Or grandmas do this right? But she'd always make the sign of the cross over the bread as she was baking it to thank the Lord. And also as she said, to let the fairies out before she put it in the oven. Her name was Hannah. She was incredible. I moved to Wisconsin in around 2001, and that year was a very defining year for America. Do you remember what happened in 2000 1, 9 11, and I was actually due to fly into New York on a united flight on nine 11, and I flew a week later, I got special permission.

They thought I was a chaplain actually because of the kind of visa that I had, which was a religious workers' visa. And they presumed that I was a chaplain coming into minister to the families of those who were killed. So I flew in on the flight and as we flew over New York, all of the air stewards stood down the middle and all of the shutters and the windows were lifted, and we saw the clouds of smoke billowing and billowing. In the days after nine 11, the woman next to me held my hand. She had lost her son in the towers and she said, I don't know how I can bear it. I can't, can't bear this.

She said, can you say something to me to give me hope? And I looked at her face and I said, there is no, there's no words that I can give you comfort for the sorrow that you feel in your heart. All that I can do is to be here with you and hold you and to remind you. And I said, I don't know if you're a person of faith, but on days when I have found it difficult to think about getting up in the morning, I am reminded of the blessed mother who stood at the foot of her cross as she watched her son taken from her.

She took out of her pocket her rosary beads. I haven't prayed these in a long time, and we prayed the rosary together. It was a great lesson for me and hope. Hope is not just happiness, right? It's not just this bright, sparky, joyful feeling, but it's what remains when we go through the toughest times in our lives, times when we lose a loved one or a child or go through a divorce or have a nervous breakdown or find ourselves at the bottom of a bottle. It was a beautiful moment during the mass today when a couple passed up the aisle at one point and Suzette leaned over because the lady was crying and Suzette said to me, they just lost their baby.

And as they came up, they received a blessing and they walked back together and I could see her face transfigured as the community nodded, mild, greeted them the sounds of children, which she was here in her grief with her husband by her side. In this place, hope is what remains when everything else has been taken from us. Now, I want to take you into a particular time in history when hope was thin. Blessed are those who hope in the Lord. That's what the Lord says to us. Blessed are you who hope in me Now, we hope for a lot of things in life, we have hope that traffic is going to ease up in this area or that house prices are going to come down or that our politicians will be nicer and kinder to each other.

We're going to wait until eternity. I think for that one, we hope it's natural to hope, which tells us that God has given us a seed of hope in our hearts that he wants to connect with. So the question I have for you right now is just reflect on this. We're going to take a moment, and for those in the livestream, I invite you to participate too. What are you most hopeful for right now? What are you most hopeful for? Would anyone like to raise their hand and tell me and everyone what they're hopeful for and nice and loud, and then I'll repeat it back. Yes.

Peace in the holy land. Amen. Thank you for being the brave one who went first. Who else would like to share? Yes, that is a sentiment that a lot of people feel that our children and our grandchildren will return to their faith. Thank you for sharing. Yes. For life. Yeah, for the gift of life to be here, to be given a second chance. Beautiful. Thank you. Did anyone else like to share their yes for fast recovery from surgery? Thank you for sharing that. Anyone else like to share their yes, peace, love, and respect within our families? Yes. Sometimes that's the hardest, right? Sometimes we have more hope that things are going to be fixed out there than in our families and sometimes in our own hearts too. Yes, courage to face your own truth. I see a lot of emotion in your face. Thank you for sharing that and for being here tonight. Monsignor Monsignor said he's a lot of hope for this community of faith. I have to tell you, I don't see communities like this very often. It is rare. And I leaned over today to Suzette and I said, I know I hope that if my children would be part of a community like this, I'm pretty sure that they would have a community that would support them in their Catholic faith, that would keep them Catholic. There's a lot of hope in this community.

There's amazing outreach. The music, the prayer, the preaching, your community in Africa, you are so blessed to live here. And yet don't we all have struggles that we carry in our hearts? Aren't we all longing for a deeper sense of peace? So I wanted to take us into a time in the life of the world when hope seemed thin, and then we're going to talk about what that is. I am keeping an eye on my time. I am a chatty lady and I want to make sure I get through I 69 slides for the next three nights. And currently I'm on slide three introducing myself. So time to boogie. Okay, so almost 80 years ago, a terrible, terrible thing happened in the life of the world. And in fact, this summer when the Barbie movie came out, what was the other movie that came out that had a lot of fanfare about it? Oppenheimer that talked about the atomic bomb now in Hiroshima, and if there's anyone here from Japan who is going to be an Irish person is butchering the name of my town, I apologize to you, but I want to share this story that is just such an incredible story of hope. In early August, the famous GCO trees of Hiroshima and Naoshima were blooming, and Gco is bright yellow and has these beautiful leafy and they're just majestic.

And they were standing tall and beautiful, and they are a fossil tree that stretched all the way back to the Permian. Period, about 260 million years. In fact, I had a beautiful slide showing you what the trees looked like the day after the bomb was dropped. All that was left was a trunk that was stripped bare. The roots were exposed and the leaves had fallen away. They were no longer majestic and beautiful and glorified. They were barren and raw. There was nothing left. And the trees were overlooked as just one more casualty in human destruction of life and loss. And no one was more surprised than the people of those citizens. When the first year after the atomic bomb, they saw buds on the trees of Hiroshima.

They called the famous a bomb trees. Tiny little buds came out on those trees and people were absolutely amazed. How could the trees have survived? And researchers did an analysis and they found three specific reasons. The first one was there was a core of living cells at the heart of the tree that we're still communicating with each other. We are alive, we are here. And those cells send energy and life back up into the branches and leaves of the tree who started taking in light and air and sent that down into the roots, which we're still alive to be nourished. There's times in our lives when we feel like the church is falling apart or we are falling apart, but we are the living cells of a community that stretches all the way back to Jesus Christ himself. We are the living cells of hope that bring light and life into the world through our faith. You are a seed of hope and every time you receive Jesus in the Eucharist, see that tabernacle there, you become a tabernacle with feet that takes Jesus out onto the streets to a world that is living oftentimes very far from the mercy and of God.

When we think about hope, hope has a name. Hope has a face for you. It might be the face of someone who is here tonight. For me, it was the face of that mother today who stood so proud and so broken, a living cell of hope going out into the world still here, feeling welcomed and encouraged. You are a living cell of hope. Now we come into Lent and into these perished missions, sometimes very tired. My son said to me once, is there anything decent between Christmas and Easter for a holiday? And I was like, that's why God made St. Patrick's Day, of course. But Lent is this desert time and it's solemn and it's somber

and it's to put us in touch with, as that lady said earlier, our need for our own truth. To look at ourselves in the mirror and ask, who are we and what do we stand for? And sometimes the decisions and the choices that we make in life can lead us. It seems very far from God's path.

We make mistakes and as hard as we can be on other people, the hardest person that we are on is ourselves. That judgy voice that you hear inside your head that said, why did you say that that was so stupid? Or if only you looked different or sounded different, or if you were better or richer or thinner or smarter, your life would look different. That's the voice of judgment. That is not the voice of God. The voice of God is love. And we hear in the scriptures, we sometimes make this very complicated. The scriptures are very clear with us on this. They say to us that God is love. Not just that he has love, but that he is love. And when we choose to love in the midst of sadness or times when we've been bullied, that's when God is strongest within us. So that tiny, still small flame of hope that says, you are a good person, you are a great mother.

You tried your best to give your children a sense of living faith, that is the voice of God within you. That is the voice of hope. Now, I said this earlier today, but it's hard sometimes for us to think about, well, God, I just feel sometimes so empty. And I remember when I had my first child and my mother was in Ireland and I called her and I would say, the child sometimes cries here and there, and you want to do everything you can for the child because crying, is he in pain? Is he wet? Is he hungry? Is he thirsty? And my mother was like, Julianne, you'll get to know the sound of the hunger cries is like, I was like, that makes no sense. He goes, you'll know it when you hear it. And I would put my child against my heart and I would pray, Lord, help me be a mother that understands what he's hungry for. And I had a moment recently when my son made his first Eucharist and he stepped up to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. And I realized I had a powerful moment when I realized I can't receive the Eucharist for him.

Only he can receive it for himself. You can sit with your family, you can bring your children to faith, but they only they can receive the Eucharist. You cannot receive on behalf of anybody else. Only you can receive for yourself. And babies' cries can be silenced somewhat easy with milk or a fresh diaper or whatever it is. But the cries that we have in our hearts sound like this. I am lonely. I don't belong. Nobody understands me. I have ruined that friendship. I left him. I had to leave. I lost my child. I don't know who I am anymore.

Those are hungers that we lock in our hearts and we don't tell anybody else. About a couple of years ago, I went through a very difficult part of my life and I called my husband on the way home and I said to him, hun, it's been a bad day at work. And he's like, how bad a day I was like a large glass of wine, bad day. And he's like the regular, I was like the glass that's as big as my head. And he is an amazing husband. And I came in the door and he had my glass of wine waiting for me. And I said, I just need a minute. And I went and I got into bed with the glass of wine. You know what I'm talking about, right?

And because he knew it was so bad, he also brought me dark chocolate covered almonds. And I was sitting in bed and I was having a little bit of a wine fest, and I was playing my little tiny violin of sympathy for myself, right? And if I could have thought about my mom in that moment, she would've said, get down off the cross. Julianne, somebody else needs the wood. It's not that bad. But as I was sitting there drinking and eating my chocolate, I hear a voice cry out honestly. And it wasn't inside my head. And this was a voice. You satisfy the hungry heart. And I stopped, and my youngest son, Sean, was in the bathroom brushing his teeth, singing You Satisfy the hungry heart. And I realized in that moment, I put down my wine, I put down my chocolate, and I said, Lord, my heart is hungry. I am tired. I am overwhelmed. Someone was mean to me today, but my heart is hungry for your comfort and your love. We are all hungry for something today. What are you hungry for? Here are the things that our hearts are hungry for joy, for healing, for hope, for understanding, for justice, for change, for time right now, I want you to acknowledge what are you hungry for tonight?

Thank you. Patience. What else? Share your hungers. Change. Change. Yes. What else? Yes, for clarity. Thank you. What else? Yes. For tolerance. Yes. Beautiful. For trust, for mercy. I had a young adult once



who said to me, I'm going to tell you I'm hungry for a boyfriend. I'm like, great. You're hungry for love. Who else is hungry tonight? What are you hungry for? Yes. Acceptance. Beautiful. I feel like there's one more. Someone is waiting. Peace. Thank you. Sincerity over here with the hand went up. Are we stretching? I can't tell. There you go. Very good, serenity. Beautiful. I am going to just take a little moment to pray with you tonight, and this prayer is from St. Catherine of Sienna, but I want you, and it's okay not to share out loud your hunger, but I really want you to really tap into what you're hungry for tonight. And the way I'm going to get at it is through this question, if you could give up one thing right now to be truly happy and to be truly at peace, what would it be? If you could give up one thing right now to be truly happy and at peace, what would that be?

You don't have to tell me. I'm going to pray this with you. For now. Just let the words wash over you. Father, I am hungry for the love of God. Give my soul this food, my Lord, in the Eucharist. Amen. I'm going to pray it and then I'm going to have you repeat the words after me quietly and silently in your heart. Father, I am hungry for the love of God. Give my soul this food, my Lord in the Eucharist, amen. Time, repeat after me. Father, I am hungry for your love. Give my soul this food, my Lord in the Eucharist. Amen. Thank you. We are all hungry people. We need shelter and strength. We are won in our hurting. We are won in our pain, in our suffering and sadness. We are saved by the grace of the power and the spirit that is here in this place.

If I had prepared a little better, I would've had merit accompaniment on this. But for these next three nights, we are going to break open that Psalm through our own hungers as hungry people for hope. I want to step into the scriptures to a time when the disciples felt like there was no hope and they had times where there was a lot going on on the road to Emmaus, gossiping with each other and dejected and despairing asking, where is the Lord? Peter betraying the Lord running away or the disciples out on the boat fishing in the middle of a storm and crying out in their terror and their panic, there's a ghost.

And then Peter, ever the impetuous one says, Lord, if it's you, so not even sure who he's talking to at that point. If it's you, command me to come on the water. And this is so fascinating because Peter gets out of the boat and we are told this, he starts to walk on water. Peter must have had the hope that that was Jesus Christ himself in front of him because he got out. And then we are told that seeing the storm swirling around him, he started to sink. And my favorite word in this gospel passage is this one. Immediately, immediately the Lord reached out and caught him by the hand when he started to sink.

There's a great lesson for us here in this, in that if we look at the storm that's around us, we will sink. If we focus on all the places that are broken in our world, all the places in our lives where we're hurting, we will drown in that sadness and despair. But if we keep our eyes focused on Jesus Christ, he will catch us because we have hope in him who is greater than us. No matter what you go through in life, keep the joy and the hope of the Lord with you. He reaches out his hand and he says to you tonight, join me, walk with me. Now, lent is a particularly interesting time. It's what we call a liminal time, a threshold time.

Remember when husbands would, or we have it in our tradition too, that women would carry the fella over the threshold after the wedding too, crossing the threshold signified, you are coming into the home in a different way. You're now married, your life is different, you are changed. Lent is a threshold. It's a time of great change for us, but only if we accept it. I'm asking you to throw open the doors of your heart to this what we call in Ireland thin time. Now, what's a thin time or a thin place?

It's where God is breaking through to speak to us in a very powerful way. So we're going to do just a little exercise here. Hands up. Anyone who has ever been in a room when someone they loved has passed away. Do you remember what that was like? I want you to just think about it for a moment. Serene, surreal. The person is there, but all of a sudden they're not there. There's this great chasm opens up and you can feel something has changed. And in Ireland actually, we stop the clocks in our houses and we cover the mirrors in our homes traditionally because when you lose somebody, time changes forever for you. You think about the loss before you had your mother, after you had your mother, when your dad was alive, when your dad passed, when your friend passed away, you mark time differently.

Hands up anyone that's been in a room when a baby has been born. Do you remember what that felt like? I had this crazy little Irish moment. Let me tell you a quick story I wasn't planning on telling you, but it seemed like a good time to tell it. After I had my first child, I said to the doctor before, you know, have all these ideas. It's your first child, it's going to be this quiet process. And I am howling like a spirit at my husband in the middle of all of this. But I had told the doctor, if it's possible, as the child is being birthed, can I touch the child first? And she was like, why? And I said, because the last hands to touch my child or God's hands, and I want a little bit of that for me as the mother. And so after my son was born, they put him on my chest and I felt everything was different in life.

I see some of you remembering that moment. And so I reluctantly passed my son to my husband and I got out of bed and all of a sudden there's alarms going off. Beep beep. Now I didn't realize that I was on ice and I was in bed panic. Okay, let's just not maybe talk about that, right? But there's things like the nurse needs to go with you. And the nurse comes into the room and she's like, you're still hooked up to your monitor. And I was like, yeah, but I need to go to the bathroom. And she was like, why? And I was like, I said, I want to look in the mirror. And she goes to put makeup on very judgy. And I said, no. I said, no, I'm a mother. I think I look different. I want to see if I look like a mother because seeing life so different right now, that's a thin place. Have you ever been at mass here and you received the Eucharist and you started to cry? Some of you have had that experience, many of you. Or you see the sunrise come up and you start to cry and you're not sure why. Those are moments, thin moments of hope where God is breaking through to tell you that he loves you and he stirs your heart to emotion.

I think there are times in our lives we all go through where we see these seeds of hope and we overlook them because we think it's just a coincidence. Now, I mentioned that today is a special day, right? It's a hard day in some respects. This is the day that Bishop David O'Connell passed away a year ago, and I wanted to share a little bit of a story about him. Had some really cute images of him growing up in Ireland, but there's a great lesson on hope for us here. David grew up in this place in the West Cork and I actually went home last year to speak to the priest and his diocese and meet with his family. He came over here when he was just a kid, just a boy, and he fell in love with California and the people. And so when he would call me, he would always send me two things. If you ever got a text message from him, he always sent a sunshine with sunglasses for California and a shamrock, every single text. And so after he passed away, I kept all those messages from him. But before he passed, I had the great honor and terrifying privilege of speaking through the priests of the diocese. Monsignor, do you remember that? Oh my gosh. Never did my knees shake more. There's two groups that I am terrified in speaking in front of teachers and priests because they can be tough audiences. Isn't that interesting?

But the priests were wonderful. They were truly wonderful and there was a spirit of joy and generosity. A couple of the priests came up to me and told me that they were struggling with their faith. Now that might be shocking, but our priests are human beings too who put their pants on one leg at a time like us and have days when they struggle to hear the voice of God. And one priest came up to me and shared a little bit of a story and it was a pretty serious one, and he was on my heart a lot. So the week after I got back from that event and experiencing the beautiful sun in desert, was it desert springs or a palm desert? It was a palm and a desert and it was very hot. Was it Palm Springs? Palm Springs in August? Wow, was it hot? But I got back and I was having trouble forgetting the stories that I heard from the priest. And Bishop Dave called me and he said, here's what I want you to do. I want you to go in front of the Lord and imagine that you're putting your arms around the tabernacle to give him a great big hug and ask him to release all the burdens that you're carrying from the stories that people share with you and give those burdens back to the Lord.

And I did it and it was life changing for me. I want you to do that right now. You know that hunger that you talked about that's gnawing at your heart. I want you to look at Jesus. I'm going to be quiet, which is very hard for me, and I'm just going to imagine. I want you to imagine that you're just coming to put your hands on the tabernacle where his body and blood is in the Eucharist. He's asking that you open your heart to him right now, and if you can, I'm going to ask that you put your hands out to him. You can keep

them down if you like, but I want you to physically think about putting whatever it is that's burdening you. And if it's more than one thing, that's okay, but imagine that you're putting it from your heart right into your hands. So here's what I want you to do. I want you to physically imagine yourself pulling out whatever that pain is or that experience, pull it out and put it in your heart and lift it up to God in your own time.

And imagine that the Lord is with you. You're putting your arms around him and he sees the child you are inside, beautiful and beloved. So tell him, tell the Lord right now what burden you'd like him to take from you tonight. Thank you Jesus. Thank you for loving us. We are gathered a table as one in the Lord. We are gathered as people who are living the word. Our hearts and our spirits are nurtured by grace. It is Jesus who fails us. He is here in this place. I want to thank you for listening and praying with me tonight. And thank you for sharing your heart with Jesus and being moved tonight. What tonight was about acknowledging those hungers. Tomorrow night we're going to go much more deeply into the Eucharist, broken and blessed for us. And on the last night, we're going to share a little of our stories and allow the blessed mother to come with us on this journey of hope and to accompany us. But before I end tonight and I have a little prayer, I want to take some questions from you, questions, anything that's stirring in your heart right now. I know that was a lot, right?

What is it that's starring right now for you? Yes. What is the most important thing that I see that you should be doing in Lent? Great question. And it's something that I ask myself every year because I don't know what it is about Lent, but I feel like I'm never really prepared for Lent until it's like here. Does that sound familiar? And so then I default to doing things that I've always done. And what I've realized is that we sometimes think that we do these practices in Lent to make God love us more. God, God already loves you, but what Lent is teaching us is to remove things in our lives that are preventing us from loving God, not God from loving us. And so I think the most impactful things that we can do in Lent is to give grace and space to allow the Lord to direct lent for us.

And I have four keys for Lent, L-E-E-N-T. Let go of your own agenda of what God wants for you. I'm going to give you a cautionary tale in one moment. E enter into this time of Lent with an open heart and take time to read his word and share his word with someone, just a line or two from scriptures and never give up if you're someone who gives up things for Lent. My dad was a big chocolate one, and I am too. I would have this day where I'm like, okay, well I had one piece of chocolate, so I might as well eat all the chocolate today or there's no meat on Friday. Well, okay, I had a ham sandwich this morning and I forgot, and now I'm just going to go for the steak for dinner, right? It's like Lent is not all or nothing. You can start again. That's the whole point of Lent. And then the tea piece is take time out.

I was to say one thing that has changed my life, it's just to come into a quiet church and just sit in front of them and say, I love you LENT. A couple of years ago I decided to do the 40 days and 40 bags challenge. Do you remember that? The whole object was to take 40 bags of clutter out of your house during length, but you have to take a bag every day. And they didn't have to be giant bags. It could be like the junk drawer, which I talked about a couple of years ago, like tucking all your stuff in that or organizing your sandwich baggy drawer or your sippy cup drawer or whatever it is, but you have to get rid of 40 and you're like, that's a great idea, isn't it? Right? I thought it was a great idea too until I went into holy week, absolutely exhausted and cranky.

Why? Because my house was definitely cleaner, but my heart certainly was not pure. I had spent all my time focusing on doing the thing instead of asking what God was doing in me. So I think that is an excellent question, is to allow God to direct what it is he wants you to do. So sit in front of him and say, God, what do you want me to do this year? Do you want me to fast from judgment or anger or from thinking about that person or that thing? What is it that you would have me do so that I can love you more because I know you love me? And then let Lent unfold. And that is an amazing way to experience lent. Thank you for your question. What else? What other questions do you have for me? Or it can be a statement. I'm open for that too.

I did, yeah. So I wrote the book Start With Jesus because there's a lot of different reasons, but the story that I told at the beginning of the book was an important one for me. I went to wake up my son to go to church one morning and he was four at the time. And I said, Ian, we have to go to mass today. And he was in bed and he was all curled up and he said, and it broke my heart. I don't want to go to church, I don't want to go to mass. And I said, why not? And he said, because nobody looks happy there.

Now, this is not an experience I think my son would see in this community, but he certainly saw it in mine at home. And I wrote, start with Jesus because so many of us talk about having a relationship with church instead of a relationship with Jesus. And I had a friend of mine who came to me and he said, Julianne, I've been a pastor. He was 65 at the time. And he said, I hear you talk about your relationship with Jesus, and I don't have a relationship with Jesus. I have a relationship with the church. I'm going to church. The church is asking me to do this. And he said, I would like to get to know this Jesus. And I'm 65 years of age, and he did. And he became a bishop actually about four years ago. It's very interesting because he had met the Lord and actually it changed his life because when you meet the Lord, you are different.

And church is part of that, right? But I wrote start with Jesus because I wanted to be able to have a conversation with people I loved about how Catholic it is for us to have a relationship with Jesus and to talk about it because so many people are told our faith is private. It's not faith is personal. It's not meant to be kept private. It's faith that's portable, shareable, adaptable, nimble. It goes where we go. Like say Teresa. Teresa says, Christ has no body but yours. No hands but yours, no feet but yours, no voice but yours. And yet many Catholics were telling me, I don't know this Jesus, are you sure? This is a Catholic thing? And so that's why I will start with Jesus to help people to talk about their relationship with Jesus and to share their story of faith so that they're not passing on the faith or our faith Like it's a manual you get when you want to drive a car, but it's our faith, our community of hope. So thank you. Start with Jesus. That was a fun one to write. Yes.

That's a great question. What can you do to keep the fire of hope going? Oh boy, that's a deep one. I think one of the keys to that question lies in the times when we feel most broken. Because when we are at a low ebb and we feel like we have no hope, it's then that the Lord is most present to us even if we can't see it. And I think when we go through times like that, we think we're falling apart. But actually the Eucharist gives us the way here. The Eucharist doesn't fall apart on the altar. Father doesn't shred the Eucharist. He breaks it open, which teaches us something very important that when we feel like we are falling apart, we are being broken open like the Eucharist. So more of God's grace and light and power and glory can be poured into our hearts.

And so when you feel that you are being broken and falling apart and hope is low for you, recognize that in those moments, God is the most close to you, even if you can't hear his voice. I love this scripture, read the Book of Kings where Elijah is asked to go out on Mount Ho. And it's such a great story because he goes out on the mountain and he's told the Lord is going to pass by. And of course I don't know about you, but if you're thinking that God is coming by, you're waiting for something big to happen, and we're told that an earthquake comes and a mighty fire and it could be California and we're told that the Lord was not in the earthquake or the fire or the flood or any of those things, but the voice came by in the still small quiet voice, that flame of hope that says to you, you can get up to date. Julianne, yesterday was a bad day. Keep on going woman. That tiny little voice that urges you to try again to do a life again, to go again, that is God's voice in the whisper of your heart. So lean into that. You're welcome. Let's take one or two more questions. Would anyone like to share a question?

I feel like I'm hearing questions. Yeah, don't be afraid. Wow, that's an incredible question. How did I get to this point in my life to be able to share with you? I was totally broken open in my life. Suffering always brings growth. Even when we don't see it, there is no suffering that you can go through that isn't going to bring growth. And the Eucharist, actually I'll save that little story for tomorrow night. The Eucharist teaches us that, but I suffered a lot in my life. I buried my second child and my daughter has a chronic



illness. I lost my mother to cancer when she was 54. My father was in an explosion when I was 14. He was in a burn unit for a year.

My mother was a stay-at-home mom and my dad was self-employed. We knew poverty, but great joy and generosity from people. And through those experiences, a good friend of mine came to me and said, never forget that God is in the midst of all of this. And so I asked him, if you are a good and loving God, speak to me. And he did. Even sometimes when he was quiet, even when I wondered why these things happened, somebody came along to be an angel, a guide, a support, a help. And that is true for so many of us. We are seeds of hope for each other. So there's, there's no magic. There's just everybody. You all could be here sharing with each other. I am not an extraordinary person. I'm an ordinary person who sees God in his extraordinary people in you. I saw him today. I cried actually, I called my husband and I said, I think we need to move to California. We can't afford it. I don't know where we'd have to live, but we are moving here. This is the parish for me.

He is like, okay, Julianne. I come back very excited from things, and I'm always the one, hon, we got to do this. What did you experience now? Oh, it was so good. We've got to do what they do out there. It's so wonderful. But what makes you unique is the special gifts of your community, of Monsignor and Father, all the fathers and the staff and you. This is a community with you. So the answer is, God only knows why I'm here, but I'm grateful to him. And I tell him that every day. The greatest prayer of our heart is thank you. And that's what Eucharist means. Eucharist. If you go to Greece, the shopkeepers during Easter throw open their doors and they shout out Euo, Riso, which means thank you Thanksgiving. And if you can throw open the door of your heart every morning and say thank you to God, he'll give you another blessing.

Often when you leave to expected and sometimes when you do, thank you for that compliment. Yes, a great story. My husband is an incredible man. He's a drug and alcohol counselor, but I met him, he's American, he's from Milwaukee, total cheese head go pack and all that big into that. I went to be a counselor at a school and I was sitting in the waiting room for the interview and I see there's a cute guy over. And then awkwardly realized that he's also interviewing for this job. And even more awkward than that was when he got the job and became my boss because he got the job. And then they called me and brought me back. They liked me and gave me a different role at the school. And do you have time for just a very brief story? Okay.

When I started at this school, I think I might've told this story, mixed story, but I'll tell it in a little different way tonight. When I started at this school working with my husband, who was not my husband at the time, because that he was older than me and I was in this space in my life where I was single free to mingle. I was just in a very different place, but I was really striving to live out my faith. And at this school we were told, no faith. It's scientifically based, none of that. We're not going to be talking about any of that here. And you a little Irish girl, you seem like you like to talk about faith a lot, none of that, please here. And so I move into my office at this boarding school and I'm like, I have a little statue of St. Bridget and my little St. Patrick. You can't take the girl out of Ireland, right? I have a little kettle installed in my office and everything. And one of the staff came to me and said, you cannot have any of that religious stuff in here. We serve all faith and no faith. And I said, okay. And I realized it was going to be like my hand being tied behind my back. He said to me, can you counsel students without referring to your faith? And I really wanted the job. And I said yes.

And so not having anything around me to remind me of my faith and inspire me was very hard. And one day a jar, literally a jar of McCormick mustard seeds arrived on my desk that said, be the mustard seed, no name. And about three months after I was at that school, a young man came into my office and he passed out. He had tried to take his life that day, and when we brought him round, the marks on his neck were raw and angry. And I sat with him, said what was going on? He said, I'm being bullied because I'm different. And he was creative and artistic and musical and smart. And a group of boys, sporty, burly guys were beating him up, physically punching him in places where they knew he would have to cover his body.

And I remember sitting in the meeting after that experience, and I heard the dean of students, who was the guy that sat opposite me in the interview, talk about let's review the security footage. I should also tell you, my husband was a former deputy sheriff. He's like, let's review the security footage and make sure that we're safe on campus. And the school nurse was talking about the medicine. Maybe we need to look at the dosage and let's get a psychologist and a counselor in. And I remember having this moment where I said, but somebody needs to talk about the hole that's in Nick's heart.

And his mother came to me and she said, I believe that you are a woman of prayer. We are not Catholic, but would you talk to him about what's really going on in his life? And I said, I can't. This is not a place where we can discuss faith, but if we step three feet off the property, he can talk to me about anything he wants. And so we would go for very long walks and Nick would talk to me about everything that was happening in his life. And I gave him a prayer card. And on the front of it is the surrender prayer. You know, the prayer God gave me the courage to accept mostly to accept himself is actually what I was thinking. But on the back was this image of Jesus's dissent into hell. Did you hear that in the scriptures today?

By the way, Jesus went down into the depths to save those who are disobedient. We say this, he descended into hell. And Nick said, what is this prayer card? I said, it's an image from an Italian artist from the 15th century that remembers Christ's dissent into hell. I said, Nick, there's no hell where you can go in your life, where Christ will not be with you and will save you from a couple of years after that, I went back and Nick was college speech, graduate the baccalaureate. You know what I'm talking about? I don't use the words for it. And he was giving this talk and he chose to share about the time when he almost took his own life and out of his back pocket, he pulled the prayer card that I had given him all those years before. There were two miracles in this story as Seeds of Hope.

The first one is Nick became Catholic because when he passed out, he had a vision of a woman in blue holding him. And it was our Lady. And the second miracle is I found out who gave me the jar of McCormick Mustard seeds. I've been married to him for 16 years. It was my husband who was a fallen away Catholic, who had stopped practicing his faith and came and saw a little Irish mustard seed and was trying to send me a message of hope. God works in just incredible seeds that we plant in our lives. And sometimes we get to see those. And I cannot remember who asked that question, but thank you for asking that question. I think we're about at time. We're at eight 15. I'm going to ask you to do something for me. If you liked what you heard tonight, can you be a seat of hope and invite someone to come tomorrow or Wednesday with you, and then we can be Eucharist for each other. So come back and I'll see you at the reception. So I'll pass to Suzette or Merrick and thank you so much. God bless you.