

As baseball season gets underway, people often ask me, “How do you think the Royals are going to do this year?” I always give the same response every year: “We’re going all the way.” At the All-Star break, if we’re ten games out of first place, and someone asks again, “How do you think the Royals will finish up this year?” I give the same answer: “We’re going all the way.” I remember 1985. I remember 2015. I understand this is a different team, and other cities have different teams, but we’ve won the World Series twice. The opening of the baseball season every year is the opening of hope.

Remembering is hope’s greatest asset. That is the feature behind Psalm 126. We sang in response to today’s first reading, “The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.” Together with the first reading we remember two hinge moments: Moses leading the people from Egypt into the Promised Land—possibly the 13th century BC—and Cyrus freeing the Israelites from exile in Babylon in the 6th century BC. Those two events were the 1985 and 2015 of Old Testament history.

Psalm 126 remembers the liberation from exile. The powerless Israelites had lost their homeland and were being absorbed into Babylonian culture with no future of their own in sight. But out of the blue—out of the powder blue—they were set free, returned to their homeland, and rebuilt into a great nation. They sang, “When the Lord brought back the exiles of Sion, we thought we were dreaming.” It was beyond any hope.

The woman in today’s gospel—after her sin and condemnation—probably felt beyond any hope. When her accusers walked away, and Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you,” she must have thought she was dreaming.

Hope is the theme of this jubilee year. When Pope Francis announced the year, he wrote, “In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness. For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope.”

For some people, hope does not come easy. Like Israel in Egypt, they feel oppressed. Like Israel in Babylon, they feel trapped. Like the woman in the gospel, they feel their libertine past has cost their future. Then, in walks Moses. In walks Cyrus. In walks Jesus. People remember more of their past: not just evil, but grace. They are a child of God. Hope belongs to them, just the way they are.

Psalm 126 remembers the past when it prays, “Bring back our exiles, O Lord.... They go out... full of tears, bearing seed for sowing; they come back... with a song, bearing their sheaves.” Sometimes it is hard to imagine a better future, but remembering the past helps. You may not have been around when God rescued Israel or the Royals won it all. But every day brings hope like the first day of baseball. Each rising sun let’s us dream, “We’re going all the way.”