

Feast of the Ascension: Evening Prayer I

Ephesians 2:4-7

Preaching by: Sister Mary Mark Schoenstein, OP

Paul uses powerful words in this passage to the Ephesians: EXTRAVAGANT mercy, LAVISH love, OVERFLOWING RICHNESS of grace and goodness.

These are deliberately chosen words for Paul --- all superlatives. When we use the word "extravagant" we mean "out of proportion to the thing, person or event being described ... beyond rational expectation. Some would say "unreasonable." The same implication is carried by the word "lavish."

One of the benefits of the passing years, as we age chronologically and mature spiritually, is our growing ability to comprehend ever more fully the depth and breadth of God's love and mercy. Only in a maturing faith do we learn to recognize the love and mercy of God at work in certain experiences that seemed most incomprehensible at the time.

In our earlier years, in all good will and much zeal, we tend to focus on what we can do for God and God's people. As we gradually experience the limits of our efforts and of our virtue, the "I" and the "ME" begins to shift to the "WE". We begin to realize our oneness with all our brothers and sisters --- saints and sinners alike --- and we come to stand before God knowing God's enduring love and knowing our need for God's measureless mercy. It is THIS that Paul celebrates in these words to his beloved Ephesians.

As we realize we are part of the sinfulness of the world, so frighteningly present in our day and age, our only hope lies in the triumph of Jesus over all evil. It is only with and in him that we hope to be raised up and seated in the heavens, so that, as Paul so beautifully says, "in the coming age God might show overflowing richness of grace and goodness toward us."

With our Jubilarians we praise and bless our God for the marvel of his loving plan.