

In the reading this evening we hear from Acts, "With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord, Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all." Where have we heard that word favor before? Upon whom does the favor of the Lord rest, but on Mary his blessed Mother.

One of my favorite authors is Caryll Houselander. Frequently in her writings she refers to Mary; Mary as child called upon to say yes to God, Mary as a mother who raises her son, Mary as a suffering woman, Mary who, with the apostles, meets her risen Son in the upper room, Mary as the favored one.

As we heard in the reading from Acts, it is those who proclaim, who bear witness to the resurrection who are accorded favor. Mary's whole life leads to the Resurrection. But, Mary, in much of her time on earth, is pre-resurrection. She is of the Jewish belief that there is to be a savior. Caryll Houselander says,

"She was not asked to do anything herself but to let something be done to her. She was not asked to renounce anything but to receive an incredible gift. She was simply to remain in the world, go forward with her marriage to Joseph, to live the life of an artisan's wife, just what she had planned to do when she had no idea that anything out of the ordinary would ever happen to her." (Caryll Houselander, *The Essential Writings*, p. 107)

Because she allowed God to work in the ordinary every day role of housewife and mother, the gift of the humanity of Jesus was given to the world.

God didn't ask Mary to become something she was not or to live in a way separate from her family or from the people whom she called friends. He used the ordinary pattern of woman's life in that time to fill Mary with his favor. This God is also our God. This God uses the ordinary to introduce himself to us, to journey with us, to suffer with us and to rise with us.

How do we meet him every day? How do we come to know our God? What practices in our life can lead us to become favored?

The answer to this, as found in Mary's life, is to live the ordinary. We are not asked to do more than the Mother of God. We are not asked to become something God did not make us to be. Rather we are asked to use our ordinariness to serve others, to act in love. Mary's yes brought to her the ordinariness of Motherhood. Mary's yes brought about the human life of Jesus. It also brought the death and the resurrection of Jesus. Our God uses the ordinary to bring about the extraordinary if only we open our heart to trust him, and to stay faithful when the challenges abound, as Mary did.

Caryll Houselander says,

“It certainly seemed that God wanted to give the world the impression that it is ordinary for Him to be born of a human creature. Well, that is a fact. God did mean it to be the ordinary thing, for it is His will that Christ shall be born in every human being’s life and not as a rule, through extraordinary things, but through the ordinary daily life and the human love that people give to one another.” (Caryll Houselander, *The Essential Writings*, p. 108-109)

Mary, as a person of faith, led an ordinary life. The Apostles were ordinary fishermen. The birth of a Son, the meeting of new companion, both seem to be ordinary every day events. But when we couch every day in faith and in prayer we are given the vision to see God in that everydayness as Mary and the Apostles did. When we learn to trust that God uses our humanity to manifest himself we are favored by all that is around us.

Again from Caryll Houselander,

“The ultimate miracle of Divine Love is this, that the life of the Risen Lord is given to us to give to one another. It is given to us through our own human loves. ... It is given to us, if we will take it, literally into our own hands to give. It is through his Risen Life in us that Christ sends his love to the ends of the earth.” (*The Risen Christ*, p 11)

Mary gave daily bread to her Son, the ordinary work of a loving mother. Jesus became for us our daily bread, the extraordinary gift of a loving Father.

“...So it is that we, sinners that we are, provided only that we love God, are sent to give the life of the Risen Christ to the whole world, through the daily bread of our human love.” (*The Risen Christ*, p 12)