

God's Favorite

Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab
Psalm 45
1 Corinthians 15:20-27
Luke 1:39-56

A few weeks ago, I finished reading a great book entitled, The Bride Collector, by Ted Dekker. While the *fictional* plot to the story involves the FBI's attempt to stop a serial killer, there is a far more important *theological* plot to the story. Dekker uses the story to explain a very popular theological idea today—that **each of us is God's favorite**.

What happens in your heart and mind when I say to you, "You are God's favorite"? Most of us immediately build an argument about why we're *not* God's favorite! "We can't ALL be God's favorite!" "If you *really* knew me you would know that I can't possibly be God's favorite!" "God doesn't have favorites!" The notion that *I* am God's favorite seems illogical. It seems that the only way we can allow ourselves to believe that we are God's favorite is to water down the meaning of the term "favorite." Yet, it is without watering down the word "favorite," that our faith tells us that we are each God's favorite child. The main character in Ted Dekker's novel tries to explain the reality of God's favoritism saying—

You see, everyone is God's favorite.... This is possible only because God is infinite and can therefore have more than one favorite without violating the meaning of the term. He can have multiple favorites and each one is *truly a favorite*, receiving the greatest God has to offer, which is infinite.

-The Bride Collector, chapter 19, *emphasis mine*

Today's celebration of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is the celebration of Mary being God's favorite and our being God's favorite. Mary was God's favorite and her Assumption was a sign of God's favor, as were numerous other events in her life. The author of the Gospel of Luke wanted to make sure that we all understood God's favor toward Mary so he included several references to it. For example, in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, God calls Mary His "favored one" through the Archangel Gabriel.¹ A little later in the chapter, Mary herself expresses God's favor, saying, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior, for He has looked with *favor* upon His lowly servant" (Luke 1:46-48a, *Liturgy of the Hours translation, emphasis mine*). Because Mary knew she was favored by God, she had 1) the openness to receive tremendous blessings and 2) the strength to endure tremendous difficulties.

God desires each of us to move beyond our rationalizations and beyond our doubts and to simply be His favorite. Something really important happens in our hearts when we, like Mary, allow ourselves to be God's favorite. We find ourselves framing all of the events of life in God's infinite love for us. We begin to look at life through the eyes of faith and in light of eternity. We find the *expectation* we need to receive God's blessings and *strength* we need to get through life's difficulties.

¹ Luke 1:28

There are many Christians in the world today who seem unable to receive blessings from God and who don't have the strength to endure difficulties in life. Typically, these are the same Christians who struggle the most with the reality of their being God's favorite. They might go to church every week... they might pray to God every day... they might attend Bible studies, sing in the choir, lector at Mass, or host small group formation in their home... and yet, they don't believe they can ever be God's favorite child. The reason is because they stay focused on things like—the difficult circumstances in their lives, the people and situations that have been hurtful, anger, resentment, and their sinfulness. The reality is—just behind the thin veil of those distractions is God's scandalously particular love for us! When we choose to look beyond the veil at God's love, we are able to receive greater blessings and faithfully endure greater difficulties!

This week, as we celebrate one of the great signs of God's favor toward Mary—her Assumption into Heaven—let's be mindful that we, too, are God's favorite. Let's meditate on His particular love for us, the ways in which He blesses us and the particular strength He gives us in times of struggle.

SUGGESTED PRAYER EXERCISE:

- ✚ Read Isaiah 43:1-7a and replace the words “Jacob” and “Israel” with your own name. Let this Scripture passage be God's specific message to you. What happens in your heart when you hear these words from God spoken to you?

- ✚ Recall a time in your life when you felt favored by God—a time when you felt blessed, content, joyful, peaceful, alive, etc. How did God use that experience of His love in your life? What long-term effects did it have?