

Lent 2015

**For by grace you have been saved
through faith, and this is not from you;
it is the gift of God...**

Ephesians 2:8

Some years ago, I was at the deathbed of one of our loveliest sisters. I was saddened and perplexed as she struggled to let go of whatever in her past burdened her and allow herself to fall into the merciful, embracing arms of our Provident God.

Most of us grew up in a time when we were led to believe that we had to earn our salvation. I don't remember any lessons on "the gift of faith"—a gift that cannot be earned, no matter what we do. I don't remember being taught that salvation was an unearned gift. I was brought up just at the end of the days when Protestants flung at us that by "faith alone are we saved" and we tossed back "faith without works is dead"! We sent those words from Romans (5:1-11) and James (2) back and forth over the net that divided us for five hundred years, never even thinking that these words from Ephesians held the fuller answer.

And now, our God is so immense that our little idiocies are basically of no account. Realizing that we are all saved through faith by grace, all that is left is for us is to allow our egos (because of which we somehow think that we can broker our salvation!) to deconstruct (as Eckhart Tolle says in *A New Earth*) and let God continue to arrange for our salvation. Once that hurdle has been cleared, it is amazing how things change. People whom I disdained or scoffed at are suddenly beacons of salvation for us all! The poor have so much to offer that I look for opportunities to simply hang around them! My "enemies" are not outside of myself; rather, they are my own demons which demonize others who reflect my own frailties!

We are more than halfway through Lent. By now, our grand plans for "improvement" have come to naught. And, of course, we haven't "done enough"! Shall we wallow in our failures? Shall we fear the consequences once more? Or shall we go back to Ephesians 2:4-10 and cast ourselves on the mercy of God. The author of this letter says that this is all it will take for us to realize and accept our salvation. Let's not wait for a "deathbed conversion"; rather let's embrace the mercy of God every single day. Easter means that we are being saved right now—no matter how messy we are! When we live from the mentality that God's generous, unending grace is saving us all along, the world blooms with the Providence of God!

*"All the way to heaven is heaven,
because Jesus said, "I am the way."*

—St. Catherine of Sienna

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*Lent 2015
Women of Providence
in Collaboration*