**The Mercy of God**

There is one occasion in the gospels whereby Jesus tells the Pharisees, “I desire mercy not sacrifice.”

His rebuke reminds me of a wonderful story told by Sr. Jessica Powers, a Carmelite nun from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who is famous for her books of spiritual poetry. In the late 1930s Jessica Powers lived in New York City. She recalls how she sat on a park bench arguing with an editor for over two hours as to whether truth or beauty was the greater attribute in God. The editor sided with truth; she, with beauty. Several months before she died, she said that perhaps both she and the editor were wrong. "In the end," she said, "all we have is the mercy of God. That is God's greatest attribute."

Like the hungry apostles walking through a field of ripe grain, Sister Jessica knew to approach Jesus when she was most in need. She used poetry to express what ordinary words could not. Sr. Jessica knew that our healing comes from the Lord who was tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin. He does not think less of us because we have fallen. He knows that the world of sin is too strong to resist on our own. What we need to do is to “confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and timely help.” (Hebrews 4:16)

Because poetry can say in a few words what it would take pages to write, reflect on this poem of Sr. Jessica Powers that cuts right to the heart of the matter.

"Garments of God"

God sits on a chair of darkness in my soul.
He is God alone, supreme in His majesty.
I sit at His feet, a child in the dark beside Him;
my joy is aware of His glance and my sorrow is tempted
to rest on the thought that His face is turned from me.
He is clothed in the robes of His mercy, voluminous garments
not velvet or silk and affable to the touch,
but fabric strong for a frantic hand to clutch,
and I hold to it fast with the fingers of my will.
Here is my cry of faith, my deep avowal
to the Divinity that I am dust.
Here is the loud profession of my trust.
I need not go abroad
to the hills of speech or the hinterlands of music
for a crier to walk in my soul where all is still.
I have this potent prayer through good or ill:
here in the dark I clutch the garments of God.

(from p. 1 of Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers)