

Picking up from the words of the Sufi mystic Rabia of Basra quoted on Sunday, that we're not here to act out of fear of hell or love of heaven but for love of God. We can see this essential trust in God's loving nature in all three of today's readings from scripture: the strength and joy Judith gains from her trust in God and not in her riches and beauty; the admonition of Paul to Timothy to accept as 'widows' only those who truly hope in God and not those who think only of pleasure; the example of Anna the daughter of Phanuel, gifted with true insight because of her daily devotion to God. It's not that riches and beauty and their natural talents no longer matter but they have been re-ordered, placed at the service of God; there for God's use rather than their own and I'm reminded of Pope Leo the Great's words of a few weeks ago (in the liturgy, that is)

We must not therefore cling inseparably to the good things that are eternal but make use of those that are temporal like passers-by, then, as pilgrims hastening to our homeland, we use any worldly good fortune that comes to us as a means to further our journey, not as an enticement to detain us.

Leo the Great, Tract. 90, 2-3: CCL 138A, 558-561

So heaven matters, but only as a symbol of where we want to be with God, in God's presence for evermore. And our Christian invitation is to begin to live in that presence now: beginners, pilgrims, on the way – and stopping on the way to help others; a place of safety for them because of our own security in God's love. Frances of Rome and Frances of those who roam, one might say: patron saint of travellers because being at home in one place, in herself and in God, she is at home everywhere.

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