

# **GRACE AND MERIT**

## PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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**GRACE**

# Grace

- The Uncreated Grace is God Himself
- Created Grace—A share in God's Divine Life
- A supernatural gift that is unmerited
- Bestowed on rational creatures
- Human nature is not endowed with Grace; it is a gift from God. We must be given the proper equipment to live the Divine life that God desires for us.

# Sanctifying Grace and Actual Grace

- **Sanctifying grace** stays in the soul. It's what makes the soul holy; it gives the soul supernatural life. More properly, it is supernatural life. It is the grace necessary to be with God in heaven. Also known as Habitual Grace—it lives or resides or is constantly present in the soul absent of mortal sin.
- **Actual Grace** is transient; it exists for a moment of time. It is a supernatural push or encouragement. It is extrinsic and does not live in the soul, but acts on the soul from outside. It is given by God to move us toward seeking out and retaining sanctifying grace.

# **Adam and Eve**

# Original Justice and the Preternatural Gifts

- Adam and Eve were created and given the Gift of Original Justice (Sanctifying Grace) and three preternatural gifts.
- Preternatural gifts are favors granted by God above and beyond the powers or capacities of the nature that receives them but these gifts are not supernatural as is Original Justice.
- Such gifts perfect nature but do not carry it beyond the limits of created nature.
- They include three great privileges to which human beings have no title--infused knowledge, absence of concupiscence, and bodily immortality. Adam and Eve possessed these gifts before the fall.

# Gift of Infused Knowledge

- The gift of natural (secular) and supernatural (spiritual) knowledge miraculously conferred by God. Thought by some to have been possessed by Adam and Eve, who came into existence in an adult state and were to be the first teachers of the human race.
- Adam's infused knowledge was not acquired, in the sense of natural cognition derived from experience and the reasoning process; nor was it intrinsically supernatural as giving a knowledge of the mysteries, such as the souls enjoy in the beatific vision.

# Gift of Integrity

- The gift of integrity is equivalent to exemption from concupiscence. It is called "integrity" because it effected a harmonious relation between flesh and spirit by completely subordinating man's lower passions to his reason.
- Total exemption from the sway of concupiscence, whereby man's whole sensitive and imaginative life and activity are completely under control and ruled by reason. This preternatural gift was possessed by Adam and Eve before the Fall. It rendered their enjoyment of the pleasures of sensitive life more intense than ours because their natural faculties, being purer, were therefore keener.

# Gift of Bodily Immortality

- The immunity from disease and bodily death that was enjoyed by Adam and Eve before the Fall. It was a special privilege that was to have been passed on to their descendants. Since man is naturally mortal in body, this privilege was preternatural. It conferred the capacity not to die. Its purpose was to enable mankind to better use the gift of sanctifying grace in serving God.
- Bodily immortality is the converse of mortality, i.e., the possibility of separation of soul from body. Adam was therefore capable of not dying. Yet the gift was conditional, provided he did not sin; it was gratuitous, since Adam's nature by itself did not postulate this prerogative but came from the divine bounty; and it was participated, since only God enjoys essential immortality.

# **The Sin of Adam—Original Sin**

# Original Sin

- Adam received sanctifying grace not merely for himself, but for all his posterity. Original justice was intended to be hereditary justice.
- Adam received the gifts of the original state, not as an individual person, but as head of the human race, and thus for the whole human race. They were a present to human nature and, according to the positive ordinance of God, were to be transmitted with nature to all the heirs of that nature.
- Original sin consists in the deprivation of grace caused by the free act of sin committed by the head of the race. We all are born naturally and descend from Adam. We are born in a natural state without sanctifying grace.

# Redemption and Grace

- Original sin destroyed the righteousness (right relationship with God) originally attributed to our first parents and this sin created the chasm between God and man.
- Because of the infinite love and mercy of God, Jesus Christ willingly paid for our sins by his suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection and thus merited the redemption of humanity.
- The theology of the Church holds that Christ's passion not only merited the forgiveness of sin, but also the gift of grace. Grace, wrought by the Holy Spirit, is a gift that heals the soul and sanctifies it.
- “And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:16,17)

# Jesus – The New Adam

- So the “Original Sin” committed by Adam that left the human race in a deficient position without Sanctifying grace is unwound by the “New Adam” – Jesus Christ.
- “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life.” (I Corinthians 15:20-22)
- “So that if through one man sin came into the world, and through sin death, and thus death has passed into all men because in him all have sinned, from the justice of the one (Christ) the result is unto justification of life to all men.” (Romans 5:12, 18).

# **Grace and the Sacraments**

# Grace and Sacraments

- Sacraments are sense perceptible signs instituted by Jesus Christ, by which invisible grace and inward sanctification are communicated to the soul.
- In a broad sense every external sign of internal divine blessing is a sacrament. And in this sense there were already sacraments in the Old Law, such as the practice of circumcision. But, as the Council of Trent defined, these ancient rites differed essentially from the sacraments of the New Law, they did not really contain the grace they signified, nor was the fullness of grace yet available through visible channels merited and established by the Savior.

# Sacraments of the Dead

## SACRAMENTS OF THE DEAD

- Those sacraments which can be validly and fruitfully received when a person is not in the state of grace. They are baptism, penance, and, if needed, anointing of the sick.
- These sacraments confer or restore sanctifying grace and confer actual graces when received by one who is already in God's friendship.

# Sacraments of the Living

## SACRAMENTS OF THE LIVING

- The sacraments that require the state of grace to be received fruitfully.
- They are Confirmation, the Eucharist, Matrimony, and the Priesthood. Of these four, however, Confirmation, Matrimony, and Priesthood are received validly even in the state of grave sin. So that a person is really confirmed, married, or ordained, but does not obtain the graces associated with the sacraments until the state of grace is recovered.
- The Eucharist is also truly received by a person not in the state of grace but who commits a grave sin of sacrilege if he or she culpably approaches Holy Communion while estranged from divine friendship.
- The sacrament of anointing is in a class by itself, since it can be fruitfully received even in the state of grave sin. But it is considered a sacrament of the living because it should be received in the state of grace. Under certain conditions, however, it also restores sanctifying grace.

# **Grace, the Soul and Free Will**

# Grace, the Soul and Free Will

- ***Freedom and grace.*** The grace of Christ is not in the slightest way a rival of our freedom when this freedom accords with the sense of the true and the good that God has put in the human heart. On the contrary, as Christian experience attests especially in prayer, the more docile we are to the promptings of grace, the more we grow in inner freedom and confidence during trials, such as those we face in the pressures and constraints of the outer world. By the working of grace the Holy Spirit educates us in spiritual freedom in order to make us free collaborators in his work in the Church and in the world. (CCC 1742)

## Grace

- Our justification comes from the grace of God (CCC 1996).

## Free Will

- We have free will and have to choose to co-operate with God's grace. "God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us" (St. Augustine CCC 1847)

# Pelagianism and Grace

## Adversary of the Supernatural Order of Grace

- Pelagianism was named after the British lay monk, Pelagius.
- Little is known about the personal career of Pelagius. Born in England about 354, he came to Rome in the time of Pope Anastasius (399-401), where he was so alarmed by the low morality of the day that he became convinced it could only be reformed by concentrating on the responsibility of men for their actions. Together with his disciple Celestius, he began teaching a doctrine of free will which left no room for grace.
- Pelagius, the Catechism of the Catholic Church notes, believed that “man could, by the natural power of free will and without the necessary help of God’s grace, lead a morally good life” (No. 406).

- Pelagius said that heaven and the beatific vision are attainable by the use of our native powers alone, since nothing but free will is needed to practice virtue and keep out of sin.
- From the axiom that "Adam neither injured nor deprived us of anything," Pelagius concluded that men require no special help to repair what Adam is supposed to have lost.
- According to the Pelagians, the sin of Adam affected his descendants by way of bad example only. Thus, Christ's deed of Redemption consists above all in His teaching and in His example of virtue.
- Pelagianism regarded grace as within the natural capacity of man. Man in this view has a natural capacity to live a sinless and holy life and merit eternal bliss by exercising his free will.
- This natural moral striving is facilitated by outward grace, the Mosaic Law, the Gospel, and the example of virtue set by Christ; man thus achieves the remission of sins by his own power, by the act of the turning away of his will from sin.
- Pelagianism is, of course, pure naturalism, influenced by Stoic ethics. The Pelagian error was refuted by St. Augustine, and condemned by the Church at numerous particular synods.

# Adversaries of Free Will

- While Pelagius denied the supernatural endowment of man, Luther, who strained the doctrine of St. Augustine beyond its proper limits, made grace an essential constituent part of human nature.
- By its loss human nature was entirely corrupted, as its essential constituent parts were taken away and concupiscence, in which, according to Luther, original sin consists, has ever since ruled man.
- In Luther's view, therefore: fallen man is, of his own proper power, incapable of achieving knowledge of religious truth, or of performing morally good actions; Man's will is no longer free, and of itself can do nothing but sin;
- Grace is not capable of saving or intrinsically renewing and sanctifying human nature, since this is fully and entirely vitiated.
- What justification effects is merely an external covering of man's sinful state but man himself remains unchanged intrinsically. Man's will is purely passive and does not co-operate with grace, grace alone performing the work of justification.
- Saint Augustine said, " God created us without us but God will not save us without us."

# **The Relationship between Grace, Good Works and Merit**

# Grace and Good Works

- St. Paul emphasizes the all-important necessity of grace in salutary human acts :  
“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me.” (1 Cor. 15, 10)
- St. Augustine thus describes the operation of antecedent and subsequent grace : " God works in man many good things to which man does not contribute; but man does not work any good things apart from God since it is from God man receives the power to do the good things which he does" (Contra, duas Ep. Pel. (I 9, 21 = D 193).
- "The Lord prepares the will, and perfects by His co-operation that which He begins by His working. For the same God works in the beginning so that we may will to do good ... He willingly co-operates with the willing one and perfects him. ... In order that we may will (to do good), He works without (before) us ; but if we will (to do good), and so will that in fact we do it, He works with us. But without Him Who so works that we may will (to do good) and co-operates with us when we will, we can do nothing in regard to the good works of piety " (De gratia et lib. arb. 17, 33). Cf. St. Gregory the Great. Moral, XVI 25, 30, and the Prayer *Actiones nostras*.
- “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

# Good Works and Merit

- Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. (Matthew 5-11, 12)
- Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor. (1 Corinthians 3-8, 9)
- Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not for others, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the due payment of the inheritance; be slaves of the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3-23, 24)

- “Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then ***you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.***

### Concerning Almsgiving

- “Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and ***your Father who sees in secret will reward you.***

### Concerning Prayer

- “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and ***your Father who sees in secret will reward you.***

### Concerning Fasting

- “And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. ***Truly, I say to you, they have their reward.*** But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret ***will reward you.*** (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18)

# **Conditions for Supernatural Merit**

# Conditions for Supernatural Merit

The Meritorious Work itself must be:

- **Morally good**, that is, in accordance with the moral law in its object, intention and circumstances. “knowing that whatever good any one does, he will receive the same again from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free” (Eph. 6:8). God, the Absolute Holiness, can reward good only.
- **Free** from external coercion and internal necessity. According to the testimony of the general human conscience only a free action merits rewards or punishment.
- Supernatural, that is, excited and accompanied by actual grace, and **proceeding from a supernatural motive**. Even those in a state of grace require actual grace for the performance of salutary acts. A supernatural motive is requisite, because the person performing the action is endowed with reason and freedom, and therefore ought to unite his will with that of God. Jesus promises reward for the works which are performed for His sake.

# The Person Meriting

## The Meriting Person must be:

- Here on earth, i.e., in the wayfaring state. According to God's positive ordinance, the possibility of merit is limited to the period of earthly life. "We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work." (John 9:4).
- "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal.6:10).
- According to (2 Cor. 5:10), the reward is proportional to that which one has done "in the body," that is, during life on earth.
- The meriting person must be in the state of grace as far as merit properly so-called is concerned. Jesus demands permanent association with Him as a condition for the bringing forth of supernatural fruits: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me." For meritorious acting, St. Paul demands Charity, which is inseparably connected with the state of grace.

# On the Side of the Rewarding God

- Merit is dependent on the free ordinance of God to reward with everlasting bliss the good works performed by His grace.
- On account of the infinite distance between Creator and creature, man cannot of himself make God his debtor, if God does not do so by His own free ordinance. That God has made such an ordinance is clear from His promise of eternal reward. Mt. 5, 3 (the Eight Beatitudes); 19, 29 (hundred-fold reward} 25, 34
- St. Augustine says: “The Lord has made Himself a debtor, not by receiving, but by promising; Man cannot say to Him ' Give back what thou hast received ' but only, give what thou hast promised’

# The Increase of Heavenly Glory

- As the measure of the heavenly glory, according to the declaration of the General Council of Florence, is different in the various individuals who attain to the Beatific Vision according to the difference in their merits, consequently the growth of the merit also results in an increase of the glory.
- St. Paul: “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

# **Heavenly Glory vs. Vainglory**

# Vainglory

Edward P. Sri

*From the Jan/Feb 2010 Issue of Lay Witness Magazine*

- According to St. Thomas Aquinas, “glory” denotes someone’s excellence being known and approved by others. He explains that there is nothing wrong with others recognizing our good qualities and deeds.
- In fact, seeking to live in a way that inspires others to give glory to God and to pursue a more virtuous life is good. Jesus Himself said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven”(Mt. 5:16).
- However, seeking or desiring glory for its own sake is a sin, vainglory. Such a person wants glory for himself more than he wants glory for God. He wants to receive the praise of men, which is a *vain* glory that is empty, fickle, and often off the mark.
- St. Thomas Aquinas explains that the glory we seek can be vain in one of three ways.

- **First**, *it is vain to seek praise for something that is not truly praiseworthy.* Of course, this would include seeking praise for sinful acts. The college student, for example, who hopes to gain respect from his peers for his drunkenness, his sexual exploits, or his cheating on an exam is pursuing not true, but vain glory.
- Yet even devout Christians are susceptible to this vice when they plan their lives around the standards of happiness and success set up by the world.
- For example, a part of us might hope to gain respect from old friends and family members for having a successful career, wearing the latest fashions, having children succeed in school, living in a nice home, etc.
- These are not evil pursuits in themselves, but they can distract us from pursuing Christian ideals such as charity, generosity, simplicity, and humility. If these worldly pursuits hinder us from living a truly praiseworthy life—a life of virtue and holiness—then we may be seeking the vain glory of this world more than the glory of God.

- ***Second***, *it is sinful to seek glory from people whose judgment is not sound.* Most of us desire the approval of our bosses, parents, spouses, or friends. And this is natural.
- If, however, these people do not truly understand what a good, virtuous life is, we likely will be disappointed, frustrated, or misled. To seek their recognition would be pursuing vainglory, for they are not able to judge what is truly praiseworthy.
- They sometimes will praise the wrong things, and they will fail to recognize what is most noble in life. They might even look down upon aspects of our Christian life.
- Therefore, instead of seeking the approval of worldly men, we should seek the praise of Christ-and by extension, His faithful followers who judge by His standards, not the world's.

- *Third, seeking glory is sinful if in one's heart, one desires human praise more than God's praise.* Do we do virtuous deeds out of love for God and neighbor? Or is there a part of us wanting to be noticed and esteemed by others?
- If we perform righteous deeds in order to receive human recognition, we spoil the gift we could have given to God. We might receive applause here on earth, but Jesus says we will not receive a reward in heaven.
- On the other hand, the soul that desires to keep his piety hidden is the one who draws down the praise of the angels and saints. The soul that prays, fasts, and makes charitable contributions out of pure love of God-without seeking human praise-is the one who will be rewarded by the heavenly Father.

# FINAL SUMMARY

- Grace is sharing in the Divine life of God.
- Adam and Eve were given this Divine life of God (Sanctifying Grace).
- Through the sin of Adam, death entered the world and as natural descendants of our first parents, we are all born in a deficient condition, devoid of Sanctifying Grace.
- Jesus, the New Adam conquers death with the Resurrection and makes available this Sanctifying Grace to the human race through the Sacrament of Baptism.

- Human beings have free will and can choose to co-operate with the Grace that God gives us, thus enabling us to grow in Sanctification.
- We will receive a reward in heaven for the good that we do on earth. This reward will have a direct relationship with our love for God.
- Prayer, fasting, almsgiving, spiritual reading and participation in the sacramental life of the Church will foster deeper knowledge and love for God.