

Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 10, 2020

From His fullness, we have all received grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
John 1:16-17

In the opening discourse of each and every Holy Mass, these words are spoken:

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

Grace. We pray for it. We sing of it. Some of us may have even named our daughters Grace. What is this thing, this virtue, called grace? Do we really understand what we’re asking for? What is its cost? Let’s explore these questions.

Grace is a powerful word. It is defined as favor, goodwill, mercy or pardon. It is an unmerited, freely given gift from God, through the Holy Spirit bringing justification and sanctification. It is not your birthright. We hold no claim to it. Grace is at work in our lives every minute of every day.

We have come to understand that there are several types of grace at work in our lives. There are three we will discuss today, sanctifying grace, sacramental grace and habitual grace. Sanctifying grace is that grace from God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit that perfects our souls to Christ. This is the grace that we receive at baptism. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1997, provides:

“Grace is a participation in the life of God . . . by baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ.”

Sacramental Grace is that grace that is repeated each time we participate in the sacraments. Habitual grace is that grace that abides in our souls to lead us to avoid sin in our lives. It is that grace that causes us to consider our actions and our words. Habitual grace is that grace that causes us to desire confession of our failings and leads us to the grace found in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The verse at the top of this reflection speaks of “grace in the place of grace.” Many Biblical scholars have tried to take this phrase apart, resulting in several different interpretations. However, most agree that this comes down to God’s grace coming to us in degrees. As an example, the power to receive grace ourselves increases by our own abilities and willingness to forgive others. Recall the words of the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

What about the cost? I stated earlier that grace is unmerited, it is freely given. But there was a cost. I think you can see where I’m going with this. During this Easter Season, we pause in our busy lives to remember and celebrate the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We can only imagine what this really cost. In order to bring about that grace of forgiveness, Jesus endured unexplainable suffering at the hands of men, at the hands of His creation. His “YES” paid the cost of the grace we receive. We can do nothing to merit God’s grace. We must make ourselves open to receive it and believe that God will give it. Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, Knock and the door will be opened to you. Remember, after you knock, you have to stay by the door expecting it to open.