

THE GRACE OF GOD

THE PURPOSE OF GRACE

1. God created man in His image and likeness as a perfect human being above all other earthly creatures. As God's most beautiful creature, man was formed with a soul, spirit and body. [1 Thess. 5:23] The nature and potential of man both surpasses that of all other created animals. Immortal and intelligent, man was created free and master of himself.
2. God's creation of the human being did not end with the amazing potential of man's physical and spiritual natures. In His abounding Divine love, God elevated the human being even further, blessing it with a spiritual gift that is called sanctifying grace.
3. Through the gift of sanctifying grace, the human being is able to enjoy a daily personal relationship with God. Through His Divine power, God gave the human being everything he needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of Himself Who called the human through His own glory and goodness. [1 Pet. 1:3] He called the human race to become participants of His Divine nature. [1 Pet. 2:4]

THE NATURE OF GRACE

4. What is the grace of God? It is a favour received by God. This truth is found in the Gospel of Luke where it states: "The Child (*Jesus*) grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour (*grace*) of God was upon Him." [Lk. 2:40]
5. The grace of God is given to the humble. "And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'" [1 Pet. 5:5] The grace of God reflects the Heavenly Father disciplining His children in abounding Divine love. "And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, Who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you." [1 Pet. 5:10]

TYPES OF GRACES

6. Grace is something real, presented by God and found within the Christians. There are two types of grace: **actual grace** and **sanctifying** (*habitual*) grace.
7. The Christian needs actual grace at the beginning of his conversion and during his sanctification. It is necessary during the rebirth process, when passing from the old nature to the new nature. It is a "Divine urge within the soul to do what is right according to the Will of God."
8. Sanctifying grace is a constant spiritual tendency that purifies the Christian. It allows him to enjoy a daily personal relationship with God. It results in displaying the fruit of the Holy Spirit through the love of God. Sanctifying grace is different by the fact that the Christian is "continuously disposed to live and act according to the calling of God." Once received, it remains as a necessary quality of the soul.

THE COST OF GRACE

9. Both graces are freely given as gifts of God. Paul said that we are justified by God's grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by His blood, effective through faith. [Rom. 3:24]

GRACE AS A MERIT

10. At the same time, no one has a right to merit (*deserve*) grace. No one can earn it by his or her works. For grace to be called grace, it must,

- (1) be given freely by God,
- (2) cannot be deserved, and
- (3) cannot be earned by works.

THE MANAGING OF GRACE

11. Because grace is free, God gives it according to His Divine Plan, Will and Wisdom, choosing some people for greater callings than others. To some, He gives more than to others. Because grace is given as a free gift, there is no injustice in its distribution by God. No one has the right to question God as to how He distributes His grace. Regarding this, Paul said, "But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, 'Why have you made me like this?'" (Rom. 9:20)

SANCTIFYING GRACE

12. Sanctifying grace is real! It exists within the soul. In the First Letter to Timothy, it states, "Neglect not the gift (grace) that is in you." [1 Tim. 4:14]

13. In the Bible, the grace of God is compared to living water. Jesus said, "Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." [Jn. 4:14] The letter to the Romans further states, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." [Rom. 5:5]

14. When Christians receive grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, grace remains as a required quality of their souls for the purpose of their sanctification.

THE PURPOSE OF SANCTIFYING GRACE

15. Why does mankind need sanctifying grace? Because sin came into the world through Adam, bringing death to the human race. Christ came into the world to free the human race from its sin by paying the ransom price. While all were enemies of God, they were reconciled to God through the death of His Son Jesus. [Rom. 5:10] Christ gave back to mankind the grace of God that had originally been blessed upon Adam. Through Christ, all are raised to the potential of living a perfect and spiritual life.

16. Through the Sacrament of Baptism, the Christian becomes a new creation. [Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17] He is made holy and righteous in the eyes of God so he can now walk the life of Christ. [Ephes. 4:24] The justification received during the Sacrament of Baptism erases the sins that were previously committed before Baptism, including the original sin. [Rom. 3:25]

17. During the Sacrament of Baptism, the believer receives the first instalment of his holiness and righteousness. [2 Cor. 1:22] He now has what is necessary to live his faith in Jesus in order to maintain his righteousness. It is by his works, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Christian is sanctified to the fullness of Jesus. [Col. 2:10]

18. By persevering in his faith in Jesus during his sanctifying work, the Christian is sprinkled by the Blood of Christ, being maintained righteous before God. [1 Pet. 1:2] This grace maintains the Christian holy and righteous. Sanctifying grace is the undeserved grace that the Christian who is being sanctified receives from God while living his Christian life.

18a. To persevere in one's faith in Jesus requires the reception of the Sacraments of Confession and the Holy Eucharist. Through these Sacraments, the Christian is sprinkled by the Blood of Christ.

WHAT GRACE IS NOT

19. The sanctifying grace of God must not be understood to be the same as the love of God. Sanctifying grace is a spiritual gift of God, being different from His love, making the Christians worthy of eternal life in Heaven. God gives freely His grace because He loves those He has created.

20. Sanctifying grace is not God Himself. The living Christian souls that are in a state of sanctifying grace draw the favour of God so that He may dwell within their bodies. Through God's gift of grace, the presence of the Lord is noticed in the sanctified souls.

HOW GRACE TRANSFORMS

21. When a believer is baptized, he receives a new heart and a new spirit, over and above the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. His soul becomes pleasing to God. During the Sacrament of Confirmation, he is blessed with spiritual gifts for the common good of the both Sacraments leading the soul towards its salvation. The new heart and spirit are continuously drawn towards pleasing God. Because sanctifying grace exists with the soul, it is often called 'habitual' grace.

22. It should be noted that when a Christian falls into mortal sin, he is no longer in a state of sanctifying grace. He is no longer pleasing to God, nor is he worthy of God's indwelling. He must repent and confess his sins in order to regain the grace and presence of God within him.

JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE

23. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, the first work that is seen within a person is his conversion. This results in justification, fulfilling Jesus' Words, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." [Mt. 4:17] Inspired by grace, the believer turns towards God, renounces sin, and then accepts forgiveness and heavenly righteousness. Justification includes,

- (1) the remission of sins,
- (2) the birth of the new creation, and
- (3) the spiritual growth of the Christian in holiness.

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

24. There are two parts to the Paschal mystery.

- (1) Through death, Christ freed mankind from sin.
- (2) Through His Resurrection, He opened the door for mankind to a new life.

25. The new life is greater than justification. It makes the Christian right in the grace of God. "Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." [Rom. 6:4] Justification includes both, triumph over death caused by sin and a new partaking (participating) in grace. [Eph. 2:4-5] "Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." [1 Pet. 1:3]

26. The new life leads to the adoption of the believer as a child of God so he can become a brother of Christ. Jesus Himself commanded His disciples after His Resurrection to, "Go and tell My brothers." [Mt. 28:10; Jn. 20:17] By the gift of grace alone, not by nature, the Christian walks the life of faith to become an adopted son of God. He gains an equal part in the life of Jesus that was fully revealed in His resurrection.

JUSTIFIED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

27. Through the Sacrament of Baptism, by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, the Christian is justified, being cleansed of all traces of the original sin and his past sins. "The righteousness of God which comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" [Rom. 3:22] is given to Him.

28. "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him.

29. The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." [Rom. 6:8-11]

30. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian participates in Christ's Passion by dying to sin and in His Resurrection by being reborn to a new life. The Christian becomes a member of the Body of Christ that is the Church, he being grafted as a branch onto the vine that is Christ Himself. [Jn. 15:1-4]

31. Christ sacrificed Himself through His Holy Spirit. By being joined to the same Spirit, the Christian becomes united to the Divine nature. As such, those in who the Spirit of Christ dwells become part of the Divine nature. By persisting, they will become heirs of God's eternal glories. "So that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." [Tit. 3:7]

32. While the Christian is inspired to do good works, this is by the works of God, the Heavenly Father having made the first step. God's mercy draws the Christian so he may be,

- (1) healed,
- (2) be called [God drawing the believer], and
- (3) live a holy life.

God's mercy completes the Divine work so the Christian (1) once healed, may have life, (2) may be glorified, and (3) may always live with God. Without God, the Christian cannot do anything.

THE CHURCH

33. Because Christ is the Head of the Church, it is sanctified by Him, through Him and with Him. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ directs all the activities of the Church towards their goals. This includes sanctifying the Christians in Him for the glory of God. Christ deposited the fullness of the means of salvation in the Church. It is in the Church that Christians obtain their holiness by the grace of God.

THE POWER OF GRACE

34. Sanctifying grace is exactly what it suggests. It sanctifies the Christian, purifying him. It makes the Christian holy. Over and above justifying the Christian by the remission of sins, grace sanctifies the Christian. It changes him from the old nature to the new nature. The Christian becomes more Godlike in holiness. Sanctifying grace allows the Christian to become a child of God, born of God. [Jn. 1:12] From God's fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. [Jn. 1:16] Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. [Jn. 1:17] For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. [Rom. 8:14]

35. Sanctifying grace is a blessing, a favour from God. Free, it is undeserved help that God provides to the Christian. It helps him to answer His call of

- (1) becoming a child of God,
- (2) becoming His adopted heir
- (3) becoming a participant of His Divine nature, and
- (4) obtaining salvation.

THE FINAL GLORY OF GRACE

36. When the living Christian will leave this world to come face to face with God, the sanctifying grace that purified him, will allow him to perceive God in His full splendour. This grace, now called glory, will allow the Christian to know God as He knows Himself. This is eternal life, that one may know God, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom He has sent. [Jn. 17:3] Resulting from this grace, one is now God's child, not knowing what he will be like because it has not been revealed to anyone. What is known is that when Christ is revealed, the living Christian will be like Him, for he will see Him as He is. [1 Jn. 3:2]

LOVING GOD

37. Grace allows the Christian to love God as God loves Himself. This is not human love. This Divine love, while remaining in a state of grace, allows the Christian to reach out to God. This is voluntarily done. The Christian desires to receive God's infinite goodness with the hope of eternally enjoying His Divine presence.

GRACE VERSUS VIRTUES

38. Grace sanctifies the Christian while virtues do not. A virtue, such as telling the truth, is an inclination to do good, a learned habit or a lasting quality. Virtues strengthen the abilities of the Christian, his intellect and his free will.

39. Some virtues can be placed within the soul of the Christian at Baptism by God. Such spiritual virtues, acting like grace, are also gifts of God. They elevate and give power to the mind so it has the ability to perform spiritual good. The most commonly known of these virtues are faith, hope and charity.

40. The virtue of faith allows the Christian to accept Divine revealed truths that are given by the authority of God. Hope allows the Christian to trust in God and the fulfillment of His promises. Charity drives the Christian forward to love God above all without reservations and to love others because of his love for God.

THE HUMAN CHARACTER

41. The Christian who strives towards human virtues that are gained through education, continuous acts or personal repeated efforts, is sanctified and raised in holiness by Divine grace. With the help of God, the human virtues form the character and assist in the practice of goodness. The virtuous Christian is happy to practice such virtues.

GRACE GENERATES FAITH

42. As a spiritual blessing, grace cannot be experienced by a person unless by faith. The Christian cannot trust in his own feelings or his own works to satisfy his belief that he has been justified and saved. To overcome this barrier, Jesus said, "Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them." [Mt. 7:20] The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. [Gal. 5:22] When a Christian shines in these fruit, it confirms that the grace of God is at work in him, that he is saved. These fruit guide the Christian towards a greater faith. It makes him realize that without trusting in God, he is unable to grow in faith and sanctification.

43. In the virtue of faith, the Christian's intellect and free will work together with Divine grace. Through the grace of God, faith is achieved when the Christian submits his free will to agree with the Divine truth.

ACTUAL GRACE

44. The unique feature of actual grace is that it comes and goes, not remaining permanently within the Christian. It serves a purpose such as moving the Christian to do a certain good deed during a period of time.

45. The following Biblical passage explains actual grace. Paul said, "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." [1 Cor. 3:11-12] Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. [1 Cor. 3:6]

46. As needed, each one, Paul and Apollos, were given the grace of God to do the work of the Lord according to His Divine Plan and Will. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Paul came and went. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Apollos picked up from where Paul left off. This is actual grace at work. Paul and Apollos were inspired by God to act. Without the grace of God to inspire them and enlighten them, they would not have been productive.

KNOWING THE TRUTHS

47. Actual grace provides the Christian with the capability of knowing and accepting the truths of God. Such truths may consist of the reality of heaven and hell, the Virgin birth and the Incarnation, or the Resurrection and the Redemption.

48. When Jesus asked Peter, "But who do you say that I am?", Peter knew the truth. Then Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven." [Mt. 16:17] It is by the grace of God alone that Divine truths are revealed. The Bible also teaches that the Father reveals the truths to infants. [Mt. 11:25] This means that those who, innocent as children, trust in the Lord by not questioning spiritual things with a worldly mind, will know the spiritual truths of God.

49. Before faith can be given to the Christian as a gift of God, he must receive the grace of God to inspire him into action. The Christian must have received the drawing power of the Holy Spirit to guide his desire towards God, converting him to God. Then, God opens the eyes of the Christian to make it easy for him to accept and believe the truth in his heart.

BEING IN HARMONY WITH THE GRACE OF GOD

50. Receiving the grace of God depends on God and the Christian. God respects the free will of the Christian. As such, the Christian must dispose himself towards God, cooperating with Him, allowing God to act within him.

51. As an act of grace, God prepares the Christian to receive further graces. This requires that the Christian dispose himself to receive additional graces. Then God completes the work that He began, cooperating with the free will of the Christian.

52. Divine grace introduces, provides, and draws a positive answer from the Christian who has a free will to choose to accept or reject it. Grace is given in response to the strong desires of the heart to receive it without influencing the free will. Grace draws freedom to work in harmony with it. The Christian who resists the voice of conscience in his heart is not disposed to receive the grace of God. The Christian must have a sincere willingness to resist sin when tempted in order to receive the grace of God.

53. This is why some Christians are Christians by name only. They are resisting God's grace by not letting go of their worldly comforts, pleasures and ways. They place their desires first, God second. The will of God must come first!

GRACE IS A CALLING FROM GOD

54. In Baptism, God implants His Word in the heart of the Christian. Because God has implanted His Word as an act of grace within the Christian to draw him towards Him, grace is said to be a

calling from God. It helps the Christian to respond to God's calling to become an adopted son through living faith. This calling urges the Christian to desire a personal daily relationship with the Trinity of God.

A FREE SPIRITUAL CALLING

55. This calling from God to eternal life in the Heavenly Kingdom is a spiritual calling. It is freely given by God's own first action of drawing the Christian to Him. It reflects God's desire to reveal Himself and to give Himself to the people. This undeserved grace (goodness) of God is beyond all human comprehension and will. If the grace of God could be perceived, Christ, the Lord of glory, would not have been crucified. [1 Cor. 2:8]

IN COMMUNION WITH GOD BY GRACE

56. Through the grace of God the Father, the Christian participates in the life of the three Persons of the Trinity. Through Jesus, the Head of the Body, grace introduces the Christian to Baptism and to the Christian life. It allows the Christian to become an 'adopted son'. It allows him to call God "Abba" (*Dad*) in union with Jesus, His only Son. Grace ensures that the Christian will receive the Holy Spirit, He who moves to encourage the Christian to perform charity. This is the same Spirit of God who forms the Church.

GRACE AS A GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

57. While grace is first of all a gift of the Holy Spirit to justify and sanctify the believer, it includes other gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to associate the Christian with His Divine work. This allows the Christian to cooperate in the salvation of others for the growth of the Church, the Body of Christ.

58. One such gift, a grace that is different from the gifts of actual and sanctifying grace, is 'Charism'. This special grace of the Holy Spirit allows the Christian to become actively involved within the Church. It is intended for the common good of all, to build up the Church.

59. "Like good trustees of the many graces of God, Christians are called to serve one another with whatever gift each one has received." [1 Pet. 4:10]

60. Regarding the grace of Charism, Paul said, "To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All of these are activated by one and the same Spirit, Who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses." [1 Cor. 12:8-11]

THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE

61. When Paul appealed to the Lord to remove his thorn in the flesh that tormented him, he was told by Jesus, "'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me." [2 Cor. 12:9]

62. The worldly mind frequently questions God's grace, if it is sufficient to overcome the human weaknesses of the body. How often is it heard: "I have fallen to sin again"? What the worldly mind frequently forgets to consider is the work of the Holy Spirit with its sanctifying grace. The Christian who falls to sin because of the persisting thorn in the flesh comes to the realization that he is weak. He humbles himself before the others who appear strong. This keeps him from elevating himself above others, perceiving in compassion the suffering of others. Is this not God's grace purifying the soul of the Christian, an act of a loving Father Who disciplines His child? For no one can buy humility or compassion, these being spiritual gifts by the grace of God. Indeed, God's grace is sufficient for all, His power perfecting the Christian through weakness. For by the grace of God alone the Christian grows, obtaining what he needs to reach his eternal goal. God's true grace is hidden in spiritual strength, cleansing the soul that controls the body!

63. Because God has the power to make good rise from all things, it is important that the Christian realizes that he must work with God, being urged not to accept the grace of God in vain." [2 Cor. 6:1] The Christian should seek spiritual growth rather than worldly benefits and remedies.

64. Because God knows exactly how much grace everyone needs, He provides enough for all to do His work. He gives no more and no less than the Christian needs. This insures that the Christian will not excuse himself at judgment time for not having completed God's work by claiming he did not have sufficient grace. It also ensures that the Christian will not fail to use all the grace that he had received from God.

HOW TO RECEIVE GRACE

65. Grace can be received by taking part in the Sacraments that are administered in the Church and through prayer.

66. The first two Sacraments are called the Sacraments of the dead, these being Baptism and Penance. The Sacrament of Baptism transforms the Christian by the rebirth taught by Jesus. It puts the old nature to death. The Christian is given a new mind, a new heart and a new spirit, being placed in a state of grace that is pleasing to God. The Sacrament of Penance returns the fallen Christian to his original state of grace after a sincere repentance of his sins and confession.

67. The other five Sacraments are the sacraments of the living, increasing the Christian's state of grace towards a holy life. These are the sacraments of Confirmation, the Holy Eucharist, Holy Order, Matrimony and Anointing of the sick. These Sacraments increase the grace within its receiver. The greater the faith of the receiver, the greater he is worthy of receiving a greater amount of grace.

68. Through prayer, the Christian only has to ask God for the necessary grace to meet a particular need.

REFUSING THE GRACE OF GOD

69. Sacraments are only beneficial as long as the Christian is sincere. Should a Christian confess his sins without sincerity, he will not receive the grace of God. It is the same when someone decides to get baptized because everyone else in the family is baptized. There is no faith in Christ, nor a sincere desire to become a living Christian who will grow in holiness. As such, the grace of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, may not be granted to the Christian.

70. In the end, the hearts of everyone will be brought to light. No one will be able to hide their hypocrisy. [Mk. 12:38-40; Lk. 12:1-3; Jn. 3:20-21; Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:5] Those who refused the grace of God as being nothing will be condemned. [Mt. 11:20-4; 12:41-2] The behaviours that the Christian shows towards his neighbour will reveal if he accepted or rejected the grace and Divine love of God. [Mt. 5:22, 7:1-3] On the day of Judgment, Jesus will say, "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me." [Mt. 25:40]

PRAYER

71. Prayer completes the harmony between God and the Christian. It is the Christian reaching out to God in a daily personal relationship. It is responding to God's call. It responds to God having reached down to us in creation, revealing Himself through His Son Jesus Christ.

72. While God provides everyone with a certain amount of grace, there are certain graces that must be asked for, such as perseverance. This is like the farmer who prepares his soil for harvest. He must pray to God to provide the rain and the sun that will make the harvest a rich one. Work without prayer is like hope without grace. It is dead!

73. Prayer can be accomplished by reading the Bible, reciting a prayer or speaking personal words to God.