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What is grace? What role does it play in my life?

Grace is the free and undeserved assistance God offers us so that we might respond to his call to share in his divine life and attain eternal life. God's grace, as divinely offered gift, does not take away or restrict our freedom; rather, it perfects our freedom by helping us overcome the restricting power of sin, the true obstacle to our freedom. We call the grace of the Holy Spirit that we receive through faith in Jesus Christ the New Law. Significant expressions of this Law are found in Christ's Sermon on the Mount and his Last Supper discourse, where he emphasizes union with him in love as the substance and motivation for his law of grace.

Grace is the help God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life. The divine initiative in the work of grace precedes, prepares, and elicits the free response of man. Grace responds to the deepest yearnings of human freedom, calls freedom to cooperate with it, and perfects freedom. Sanctifying grace is the gratuitous gift of his life that God makes to us; it is infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. (CCC, nos. 2021-2023)



In addition to speaking about sanctifying grace, we also speak of actual graces. These refer to the particular interventions God offers us to aid us in the course of the work of sanctification. We recognize that many times and in many ways God's special love is such that he offers us help to live in a way that leads to sharing his life. Finally, there are sacramental graces, which are proper to the celebration of the Seven Sacraments, and special graces or charisms, which, while given to individuals, are meant for the common good of the Church (cf. CCC, no. 2003).

In this recognition of the reality and important role of grace in the Christian moral life, we face a struggle prompted by our culture's understanding that everything is within our human power. "My power is sufficient." Compare this with our understanding that we are indeed blessed and gifted, but much of what we fight to achieve—while written in our hearts—still needs God's grace because of the presence of sin and our inherent human weakness. The New Law is truly Good News, for not only does God give us the moral law that leads us to salvation, but through grace we receive divine assistance to follow it. We should always take heart from the words Our Lord spoke to St. Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).

You can read more from the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, order your own copy, or read questions about it at the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website](#).

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