

Theological Reflection

Grace

Introduction

Grace – the topic has one of the most extensive theological histories of the mysteries of God.

The understanding of the Trinity, how God took on flesh, the Immaculate Conception of Mary, “all had less ink used in writing about them whereas the subject of grace has had a long history, complicated, filled with theological discussion and arguments. For our purposes we need not refer to or understand those arguments. We will mention three aspects of grace:

- 1) Basic ideas of grace
- 2) Look at how grace worked in St. Ignatius
- 3) How grace works in us.

1) Grace

Uncreated grace – God himself given to a creature is uncreated grace, e.g. Trinity dwelling in us who are just and righteous, Son of God given in the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit sent to us by the Father and the Son, the love of God for man.

Every supernatural gift is called grace. Grace is a free gift of God, distinct from God himself. All grace leads to the beatific vision.

God gives us grace to even want to pray.

We can cooperate or not cooperate with this created grace.

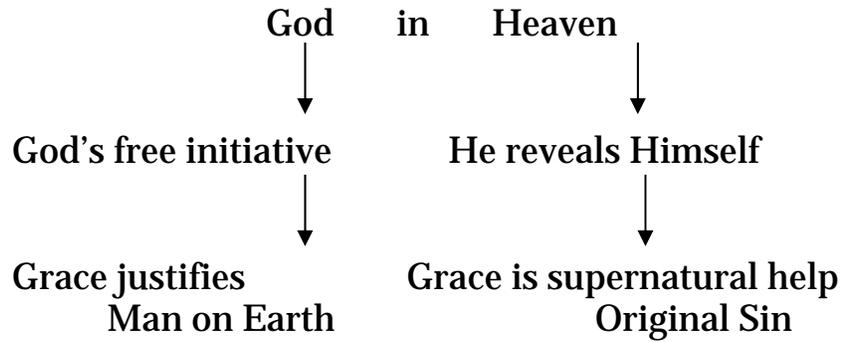
God sends us grace to help us cooperate with God’s help – grace. He allows us to disagree with it to refuse grace.

Grace is free and unmerited favor of God.

Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit – grace includes the gifts that the Spirit enables us to collaborate in the salvation of others (Catechism, #2003)

Grace heals us of sin and sanctifies us. It enables us to live with God and to act by his love. (Catechism, #2000)

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2) Ignatius

Ignatius taught followers and directees to pray for grace. Why? Because he experienced the overwhelming outpouring of grace in his life.

First the grace of conversion. Free initiative of God who reached down to him on his sick bed. All grace leads us to God. God revealed himself in internal visions and intellectual understanding like when God showed him with clarity that the Trinity was like a chord of music – 3 notes sounded together. How Ignatius wept at this revelation.

Ignatius received the grace of an intellectual understanding at the Cardoner River by which he understood the beauty of God, God's call and the material to be used in his Spiritual Exercises.

God taught him like a teacher instructing a 7 year old how important it was to pray for grace.

Grace opened him up to God's presence in his conversion.

Grace healed him of illness when he was on the brink of death.

Grace convicted him of his sinful life.

Grace motivated him to change.

Grace drew him deeper into the love and mystery of God.

Grace wooed him to do all for God – to say yes to what God called him to.

Grace gave him strength to be faithful to the call.

Grace brought perseverance.

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Grace gave him “a heart big enough to hold the entire world.” The actual words used by the Pope at Ignatius’ canonization.

So we have looked at St. Ignatius and so it has been for all the saints and their cooperation with grace and so it is with each of us. We receive the same sanctifying grace at Baptism and the grace of the other sacraments.

3) Grace in Us

Each of us has received this overwhelming outpouring of grace in our lives at Baptism.

God has revealed himself to every one of us in different ways but we all received the grace to believe in Him.

God has taken each by the hand and instructed us; lead us to the right person or program or Scripture in order to talk to our hearts. This is the work of grace.

Like Ignatius we have our conversion story through God’s grace.

Through grace we have been healed to help others.

Grace has motivated each of us as Marian Servants to change, to grow, to be healed for service.

Like Ignatius God’s grace has wooed us to this group of Marian Servants so that we might learn to say a deeper yes to his loving will.

We receive, like Ignatius, daily grace to carry on and to serve Him through serving others on these grounds.

Like him, grace brings us strength and perseverance.

And so God is stretching our hearts to hold even more of his little ones, his friends. We are a long way from having hearts big enough to hold the whole world, but God is still sending us grace to do it.

Understanding the work of grace more helps us to seek grace for every occasion, to face any problem. Beg for grace because God will not deny us

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the Holy Spirit as it says in Scripture. It is the Spirit who is grace and who brings grace. The gift of grace and the giver of grace are one in the same.

We worship you Holy Spirit of God, we beg you to come with all of your graces into our souls. Renew the face of the earth, renew the work of the Marian Servants, encourage us, bless us, strengthen us, never forsake us and make us holy servants.

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Ronald Novotny, Ph.D., S.T.L.