

Feast of the Holy Trinity

Cycle B-2024

The Feast of the Holy Trinity provides the opportunity to reflect on how the Holy Trinity is the source of all grace, in our lives and in the world. During the present season of my soul, the theme of grace has increasingly become center stage. As a middle-aged man of 53, okay maybe that is past middle age, I have become keenly aware of my need for God's grace in my life and priestly ministry. Also, the veil has been lifted, and my eyes have been opened to all the different ways God generously embraces me with His grace. I commonly experience it by being a recipient of unexpected acts of kindness, and through words of affirmation spoken precisely when I need it the most.

This leads to the all-important question, "What is grace?" Grace is God's unmerited generosity towards us. Grace is God giving Himself to us unceasingly. Every moment of our lives is filled with His grace. On one level, His grace is the divine life energy that keeps us, all of creation, and the entire visible and invisible universe in existence. On another level, we can personally experience grace in a

more dramatic fashion through a profound spiritual awakening, a deepening fire for God, moral conversion, a transformative insight, handling suffering and tragedy with a living faith, or a profound sense of call and mission. Most of the time, we experience God's grace, as a sense of His presence, guidance, love, and providential care.

The Sacred Scriptures reveal the remarkable reality that the Holy Trinity freely bestows grace on everyone, regardless of their personal, religious, spiritual, or moral worthiness. God keeps giving Himself to us even if the gift of His grace falls on the rocky or thorny soil of our hearts. The same is true whenever we are living like a prodigal son or daughter. Even when God's grace habitually bears no fruit, He does not give up on us or pull back. He keeps faithfully gifting us with His grace. God is only willing to love us lavishly and wholeheartedly.

The more the reality of God's generous grace becomes alive for us, it will heal and transform the way we view and relate to God. It will also change how we exercise our faith. God and faith will no longer be just about obligation and following the rules. We discover there is a higher purpose. The higher purpose is captured in the following story: "An angel was walking down the street

carrying a torch in one hand and a pail of water in the other. A woman asked the angel, “What are you going to do with the torch and with the pail? The angel said, “With the torch, I am going to burn down the mansions of heaven, and with the pail I am going to put out the fires of hell. THEN we shall see who really loves God.”

Do you understand the meaning of this story? As Christians we often understand and approach God and faith from the perspective of avoiding hell and gaining heaven. Our primary motivations are often fear or reward. The grace of God, however, empowers us to be in union with the Holy Trinity simply and totally out of love, not only to obtain an eternal reward or to escape everlasting misery. This truth is captured in one popular version of the Act of Contrition: “O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all of my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend You, my God, who is all good and deserving of all of my love.”

We reach the point where we love and serve God because we discover through faith, education, and personal experience that God is good, generous, and faithful. We trust His wisdom on the ultimate meaning of life and how it brings about our earthly and eternal

welfare. This major paradigm shift in our consciousness brings about a deepening joy, passion, and sense of mission in our relationship with the Holy Trinity.

There may be times that we doubt that God's grace is present and active in our lives because we struggle with the same sins, addictions, and bad habits, over and over again. In one sense, the struggle itself is an expression of God's grace, because our habitual failures remind us that we need God. Whenever St. Paul petitioned the Lord three times to remove his "thorn in the flesh," the Lord responded: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." In the big picture, the Holy Trinity knows that we are usually better off struggling yet sincerely striving, versus easily living into virtue. If we just prayed a few prayers like St. Paul or flexed our will, and our struggles magically vanished into thin air, we might be tempted to take God for granted or trust in our own power. The Good News is God may eventually deliver us from our deep-rooted sins through our perseverance in seeking His face and asking for the grace of healing and conversion. When that joyful moment arrives, we will have the humility to realize that this has all been made possible by God's grace. We also

recognize that if we start slacking off or pulling back from God, our previous struggles will most definitely return.

One reason we experience stumbling blocks in our quest for holiness is that our unconscious mind needs to be healed and transformed. Our unconscious mind can control us more than we realize. Consciously, we may want to stop committing certain sins, but unconsciously we believe they are the meaning of life or the source of our happiness. For example, we may want to become less materialistic, but unconsciously, we believe life is all about success and keeping up with Joneses. We may even turn to certain sins to deal with the hurt, deprivation, and the stresses of our past or present lives. For example, we may habitually overindulge in food and drink to handle the demands of life or to medicate some form of physical or emotional suffering. It would be highly beneficial to keep asking the Holy Trinity for the grace to heal both our unconscious motivations and the root causes of our sins. In doing so, we can gradually live into some beautiful miracles and experience the more dramatic effects of God's grace.

You know something that makes the grace of God so amazing? It is precisely in the areas that we have struggled the most, that God uses us to minister to other

people with the same affliction. As broken and redeemed vessels, we become wounded healers who can be a source of grace for others through our perspective, solidarity, empathy, and accountability. Our caring and understanding presence fosters hope and renews their faith in the love of the Holy Trinity.

It has been said that: “Grace is what God gives us when we don’t deserve it. Mercy is when God doesn’t give us what we do deserve.” I am sure we can all relate to this in our own unique way. This spiritual reality is most powerfully expressed in the Story of the Prodigal Son. In reflecting on this treasured story, the author Max Lucado states: “The difference between mercy and grace? Mercy gave the prodigal son a second chance. Grace gave him a feast.” The Holy Trinity is not just about totally enveloping us with His mercy. God also revels in celebrating our return, and in celebrating an ever-deepening relationship of love and discipleship throughout our lives.

May we see and celebrate the grace of the Holy Trinity in our lives! May we open our whole being to it and experience His healing and saving work within us! And may we keep in the forefront of our minds and hearts,

that our whole existence is always permeated with the grace of the Holy Trinity.