

Grace.

1. Grace is a *supernatural* gift freely bestowed upon us by God through the merits of Jesus Christ for our salvation.

2. We speak of it as a free *gift*, because God bestows it upon us purely out of His own goodness, not being in any way obliged to do so, for which reason also we say that it is *freely* bestowed. We call it *supernatural* because it transcends any powers innate in us and cannot be acquired by our own unaided efforts. We say that we obtain it *through the merits of Jesus Christ*, because He it was Who won it for us by dying on the Cross for our sakes. And, lastly, we say that it is given to us *for our salvation*, because God grants it to us, not for our earthly happiness, but to enable us to merit the bliss of heaven.

3. Besides grace God bestows upon us other gifts, termed *natural* gifts, e. g., health, fortune and qualities of the mind and heart.

4. These natural gifts do assist us indirectly in working out our salvation, but without the help of grace they are of no avail whatsoever, and grace alone can make us worthy of heaven.

5. Thus grace is by far the most precious thing we can have - the price paid for it was the blood of a God and it has gained heaven for us.

6. There are two kinds of grace, viz., (1) *habitual* or *sanctifying* grace, and (2) actual grace.

7. The first kind of grace is that which dwells in our souls, rendering them holy, pleasing to Almighty God and deserving of « life everlasting».

8. It is called habitual, because, so long as we are free from mortal sin, it remains within us constantly, even while the will is dormant, as in sleep. And it is termed *sanctifying* grace because it raises the soul to a supernatural condition, the *state of grace*.

9. In this happy condition we love God and are beloved by Him in return. « If any one loves Me, My Father will love him and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him. » (*John* XIV, 23.)

10. And more than this, sanctifying grace renders all our acts, even the least important, meritorious for heaven, if done with the object of pleasing God.

11. Increase of sanctifying grace is obtained principally by receiving the sacraments. By lukewarmness and venial sin (see p. 59, para. 10) we diminish it and through mortal sin lose it altogether.

12. *Actual* grace is a special help given to us by God, when we are in need of it, to enable us to do good and avoid evil.

13. It helps to within us good thoughts to the exclusion of evil one exclude evil ones and to communicate sane impulses to move and direct aright our wills.

14. In addition to this purely *internal* help, God furnishes us with *external* aids to salvation, aids that incite us to virtue, e.g. sermons, the good example of others, miracles, etc.

15. Without grace we can do nothing towards gaining heaven, for Christ Himself says: « Without Me You can do nothing. » (*John* XV, 5.)

16. God gives actual grace to all, even to sinners and infidels, because He wishes every one to be saved.

17. He gives us at least the grace of prayer, by which every other needful grace can be obtained.

18. When He vouchsafes to us this grace, we must for our part do all we can to profit by it, i. e., do nothing to resist its promptings, but surrender ourselves forthwith and completely to their guidance.

Explanation of the Plate.

19. *The small picture on the right at the top* offers us an admirable example of unquestioning obedience to the promptings of grace on the part of St. Paul. One day, being on his way to Damascus, where he intended to seize every Christian he could find and cast him into prison, he heard a voice which cried: « Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou Me? » « Who art Thou, Lord? » Paul asked, whereupon the voice replied: « I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest. » And Paul, trembling, said: « Lord, what wilt Thou have me do? » (*Acts* IX, 4-6.)

20. *In the corresponding picture on the left* we see Our Lord sitting by the well saying to the Samaritan woman: 'If thou didst know the gift of God!' (*John IV, 10*). This gift of God is grace, the most precious of all gifts we can receive here below.

21. *The large picture in the middle* is that of a virgin clothed in the white robe of innocence and holding in her hand a lily. Her gaze is directed heavenwards and the Holy Ghost has made her heart dwelling. « Know ye not », says St. Paul, « that ye are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? » (*I Cor. III, 16*)

22. On the other hand, the soul in a state of mortal sin is represented *immediately below* by a virgin enveloped in darkness, clad in mourning and held enchained by Satan, who reigns supreme in her heart.

23. Judas (*small picture at the bottom*) is a striking example of resistance to grace, notwithstanding that he had been one of the chosen Twelve.
