

Grace

The law of God, which has thus far occupied our attention, is the way of salvation marked out by Jesus Christ, the way which the Christian must walk by avoiding sin and practising virtue. To do this, man, naturally weak, has need of assistance and of the means to acquire it. This assistance is offered him, an all-powerful assistance the grace of God; and the means to obtain this grace are placed at his disposal they are the Sacraments and prayer.

Grace is the fruit of the Passion of Jesus Christ: He has merited it for us by His precious Blood; and we may say that it flows from His sacred Wounds as from so many inexhaustible fountains. It is a gift which comes to us from God, sole Author of grace, and which is especially attributed to the Holy Spirit, who is called the Dispenser of graces and of all divine gifts.

The effect of grace is to transform the worldly man into a heavenly man, worthy to be admitted into heaven. Of this transformation we have a type in the Transfiguration of Our Saviour on Tabor.

What, then, is grace which produces in us such marvellous effects?

As regards the nature of this gift, we may say that it is a spiritual principle, which is in the world of souls what light, heat, sap, and life are in the world of bodies and visible nature. As the life hidden in a seed is the principle of all its growth and of the fruits which it will yield; as the life circulating in the members of an animate body is the principle of its beauty and fruitfulness so grace diffused throughout the body of the Church and all its members, that is to say in our souls, is the invisible principle of our activity, of our vitality, of our spiritual beauty.

There are two kinds of grace, which we must be careful not to confound, actual grace and sanctifying grace: the first is a help which God gives us; the second, a spiritual life which He communicates to our soul. He who possesses sanctifying grace is said to be in the state of grace. Grace being the most precious gift of God, we ought unceasingly to implore it in prayer, and to say with St. Ignatius: "O Lord, take all that is mine; I ask naught but your love and your grace: that treasure suffices for me."