

Fr. Perozich comments —

Fr. Brent James, O.P. (Dominican) presents a clear explanation of God's grace and invitation to a deep relationship with the Trinity.

Since it is offered in parts, I will update this teaching as it is offered on SpiritualDirection.com.

Father James Dominic Brent, O.P. is a Dominican Friar who lives and teaches at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC. Several of his homilies, spiritual conferences, interviews, and radio spots can be found on his personal [Soundcloud site](#). He frequently lectures for the [Thomistic Institute](#), and appears on [Aquinas 101](#).

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Part 1

The Kingdom Of Grace

JULY 28, 2022

FR. JAMES BRENT O.P.



Editor's note: Enjoy this first in a new series on grace by Fr. James Brent, O.P. We are blessed to have him contributing to our website and to our understanding of how God works in the soul and how we cooperate in the process of sanctification. As Fr. James explains below, this divinizing work is the natural maturation of our baptismal grace and is the call of every Christian — and it is, always, the goal of all the content we seek to share on Spiritualdirection.com.

The grace of God has appeared.

Titus 2:11

“The grace of God has appeared” (Titus 2:11). A new kind of life, therefore, is possible for human beings. Thanks to the incarnation of the eternal Son of God, and his death and resurrection, the grace of the Holy Spirit was poured into our souls in our baptism. Baptism has established a new form of life in us – a supernatural life – as friends of God, other Christs in the world, adopted sons and daughters of the Father, members of the Church, and the temple of the living God. Such a gift was given to us not because of any merit of our own, but it was God who first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). He poured forth his grace into our souls in order to transform us in the depths of our hearts. And the gift of his grace, which is something of his own divine Life, is meant to grow in us.

Few people realize that the grace of God given to us in our baptism is meant to *grow*. God works to increase his grace or supernatural life in our souls, but God also calls us to participate in the process of growth through our free choices and various practices. Every one of us is called to go on a journey from the land of our bondages to the land of the living God in the heavenly places. The journey is challenging, and “many are the trials of the just man” (Ps. 34:19). Yet, through them all the God of grace is with us to lead us on to the abodes of the victorious in the Jerusalem up above. To live according to grace is the road into the Light. There is no other way.

God himself has revealed the ways and means for us to take so that his grace might grow strong in us, and so that we might shine like lights in the world around us. The gospel that the Church proclaims to the world is that *The Kingdom of Grace* is at hand. *The Kingdom of Grace* is the title of this series of articles on the spiritual life, and the purpose of the series is to provide traditional, time tested, and true teachings on the mystery of grace, on the growth of grace in our souls, and how to live our lives according to divine grace more and more.

The series will touch on many topics in the spiritual life: the meaning of grace, how the Spirit dwelling in us by grace works to form “Christ in you” (Col. 1:27), and how everything leads on to the Father. Friendship with God, filial adoption, and the indwelling Trinity are but a few of the topics, but so too are the practicals of living by grace, e.g. fruitful reception of the Eucharist, various forms of prayer, and the importance of works of mercy. Life in the kingdom of grace leads to the purification and illumination of the deep heart in each of us. It leads to the renewal of the image of God in the depths of our hearts. It leads to increasingly greater interior likeness to God – divinization. Life according to grace leads to a new awareness of God speaking to us in Scripture and liturgy, a new awareness of the presence of God dwelling in our hearts, a new awareness of God shining out all around us in people and in nature in different ways. In short, it leads to contemplative prayer and to wisdom of heart.

Such are a few of the topics in our series, and the best way to begin is with humility, i.e. with a tiny practical step. Why not take a brief moment, find a quiet place, silence oneself as much as possible, and offer up a simple prayer? Any prayer will do – the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, or whatever else one finds attractive at the moment. God never asks us to start from anywhere other than where we are now.

He never asks for more than what we can do today by the grace that is already given to us. The point is to ask for new graces. Let us ask for God to give new life to our hearts, new graces to his Church, and new graces for the many people who live “without hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). The hearts of those who are hurting and broken, indeed the whole world, is so much in need of God’s grace. The time to seek his grace is *now*. Only let us do so with confidence in the words of the Lord Jesus: “Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you.” (Mt. 7:7).

Part 2

Gospel Of Grace

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FR. JAMES BRENT O.P.



Editor’s note: This article is part 2 of a series, “The Kingdom of Grace.” Part 1 can be found [here](#).

The Lord Jesus came so that we might have life, and have it more abundantly (Jn. 10:10). The abundant life he came to give us was nothing less than eternal life – the divine Life of God himself. The gospel of grace is simply the story of how God has opened up his inner life to us, has personally called us to participate in his inner life, and actually transmits to our souls something of his own divine Life. The gospel of grace is the announcement that out of his sheer love for us God is now giving himself to us.

The story of grace begins with God. God dwells in unapproachable Light (1 Tim. 6:6). What sort of life God lives in the Light, and what goes on in his inner life too, is also a secret. No one on earth could ever imagine it, guess it, or fathom it. Yet, God did not want to keep his secret to himself. He wanted, rather, to reveal it to us. His purpose in revealing the secret of his Life, however, was not simply to tell us about it or give us new information. If his purpose were merely to tell us about it, then the revelation would have been for us like hearing of a beautiful island somewhere – a place of splendid sunrises, gorgeous waters, amazing plants and animals – but a place we never get to visit and experience for ourselves.

Rather, God wanted to open up his secret to us so that we might enter into his inner Life and to participate in it for ourselves – knowingly, lovingly, freely enjoy his eternal and divine Life. He wanted to transmit something of us his very Life to our souls. In this way, our inner life would mysteriously blend with his inner Life, and something like a marriage between God and humanity could come to pass. There is a name for the wonderful act by which God reveals his inner secret to us, calls us into his inner life and transmits something of his divine Life to our very souls. The name is *grace*.

When God set about the work of revealing his secret to us and transmitting to our souls something of his own Life, God

did so in an orderly fashion. The secret of God is that he is a Trinity of divine persons – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and the manner in which he revealed this mystery to us involves all three persons in the process. After a preparatory phase under the old covenant, when the fullness of time had come, the Father sent his eternal Son into the world. Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son of God. He was born of Mary of Nazareth in Bethlehem of Judea, and he was a real and true human being who walked the face of the earth. As he did so, Jesus carried within himself the whole divine Life. For he was the eternal Son of God, and so he carried the secret of God within himself.

Truly he lived a human life, but unique among all human beings, he also lived the divine Life. Everything that he said or did revealed this Life in some way or another. Jesus spoke of his heavenly Father, and ministered in the power of the Spirit – healings and exorcisms and sublime teachings. In the power of the same Spirit, Jesus also freely chose to die on the cross out of sheer love for us, as a sacrifice for our sins, and in so doing revealed the magnitude of divine Love for you and for me. But that was not enough. God also raised him from the dead, and in his ascension, Jesus returned to the Father. When he returned, he did so with a specific purpose in mind. His purpose was to stand before the Father of lights and intercede on our behalf for a special intention. The intention was for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us.

The Holy Spirit is the personal Love going on between the Father and the Son within the inner life of God for all eternity. Just as two people who love each other look at each other and tend to breathe a sigh of love for one another, so for all eternity the Father and the Son behold each other in splendor and breathe a sigh of Love for each other. The Holy Spirit is their eternal sigh of Love. The Holy Spirit is a sigh of Love so deep and so magnificent that the Spirit is actually a third divine

person proceeding from the Father and the Son. Teachings such as these are so very great that they deserve long meditation in their own right, but it is even more amazing to consider that day and night the risen Lord Jesus stands before the Father, shows his glorified wounds to the Father, and intercedes for you and me to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Such is the mystery of Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest.

The Father always hears the prayer of his Son, the Eternal High Priest, and the Spirit has been sent into our lives in a new and special way – in a manner over and above the Spirit’s work of creating the world. The good news that comes down to us from the apostles of old is that “the love of God has been poured forth into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rm. 5:5). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit – the grace of the Holy Spirit – is now ever at work in the world in different people and in different ways. But most importantly, the Spirit actually comes to live and dwell in the hearts of those who are baptized.

It is an amazing thing to ponder that the Holy Spirit himself abides in the depths of our hearts. He lives and abides there so long as we continue to live in a state of grace – in the sanctifying grace we received in our baptism. Once sanctifying grace has been given in baptism, it is impossible for someone to lose it except by committing mortal sin. If there is any question of having committed mortal sin, it is time to fly to the sacrament of penance. For that great sacrament restores sanctifying grace in our souls, and the Spirit comes to dwell in us anew.

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16). The question is as relevant for us today as when Saint Paul first put it to the Corinthians in the first century. How many Catholics have never heard of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! How few

Catholics realize that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the key to our sanctification and our transformation! How few Catholics learn to walk in the presence and the power of the Spirit dwelling in their hearts! One of the main points of this series is to learn more of the mystery of the Spirit dwelling in us, and how to live more and more according to his presence in our hearts.

When the Spirit comes to dwell in us, he comes to carry out a project in us – a saving mission. He comes to Love us, to give us Light, and to transmit to our souls something of the very divine Life that is in Jesus Christ. The Spirit comes to befriend us to God. He comes to inspire the pronouncement of the Name in our hearts, to flood our souls with the filial prayer of Jesus, and to transform us into another Christ in the world. Every one of these points is a mystery, and each deserves a meditation of its own. Everything begins with the gift of grace, and the gift of grace is the topic of our next article.