

Fr. Perozich comments —

Words are used daily without a foundation in meaning or without a connection to reality. Randal smith provides foundation and connection.

Grace is the free gift of God's presence and power. That presence and power is manifested in Jesus and in the Holy Spirit which Jesus promised that believers would receive after Jesus' ascension.

This grace of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit transforms man's mind to think as God thinks, man's heart to love as God loves, and man's will to act as God acts.

The Holy Spirit dwelling in the ordained priest transforms bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. The Spirit forgives sin, heals the sick, provides for the dying on the final journey, plants the Holy Spirit in a soul in baptism, assures God's unity of a couple in matrimony, announces God's truth to the soul.

The Holy Spirit in all the baptized brings the charity of teaching Jesus' name, His salvation, His care for all parts of human existence.

*The Holy Spirit grants virtues in **baptism**:*

- *divine faith*
- *divine hope*
- *divine charity*
- *prudence*
- *justice*
- *fortitude*
- *temperance*

*In **confirmation or chrismation**, the full bestowal of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit graces, gifts the soul with:*

- *wisdom*
- *knowledge*
- *understanding*
- *counsel*
- *courage*
- *piety*
- *fear of the Lord.*

*In **life**, the Spirit plants the virtues to counter the vices:*

- *humility to conquer pride*
- *meeekness to conquer ire*
- *generosity to conquer greed*
- *magnanimity (sharing one's unique graces) to conquer envy*
- *diligence (in prayer and worship) to conquer sloth*
- *temperance to conquer gluttony*

- *chastity to conquer lust*

The virtues need some reflection and an attentive ear to God speaking through our actions, through the voice of others to each person to show how grace is working and growing — or not growing.

In my own experience people sometimes illustrate a point in a homily or in my commenting that helped them. It is the Holy Spirit who moved me to speak that truth.

Other times someone may be angry and point out what caused that reaction. Maybe I need to rephrase the way a message is spoken so that the message be received. More often than not it shows me how some are not able to be reached at the moment, anchored in their peculiar understandings rather than God's grace.

Among the frustrations of grace is that everything is not given to me to satisfy the needs of all the people I meet and of all the people in the world.

A second frustration is the insistence by some more powerful than I in the church that they can and should satisfy all the needs of all the people in the world.

As a Christian and as a simple priest, I pray, listen to God, try to allow Him to work through me each day with His grace without getting in His way.

All will come together in His time, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the Christian's cooperation with that grace.

The Catholic Thing - <https://www.thecatholicthing.org>

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Randall Smith

Tuesday, December 27, 2022

The joy of Christmas is rooted in God's gift of His Son to mankind. But Christ's birth is merely the first stage of a redemptive act that culminates in Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His sending of the Holy Spirit, by whom "the love of God is poured forth into our hearts." (Rom 5:5)

The word “**grace**” comes from the Latin word *gratia*, which means “**gift.**” God’s greatest gift to us is His Son, and that gift is “**the gift that keeps on giving.**” In the Gospel of John, after Jesus has washed the disciples’ feet, He tells them He must “go away,” but this is “for their good.” Because if He does not go away, “the Helper will not come.” But if He goes, He says, “I will send him to you.” (Jn 16:7) Jesus had earlier identified “the Helper” as “the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name.” (Jn 14:26)

If Jesus had not “gone away,” we would keep looking to Jesus to do everything for us – “Jesus, heal these sick people;” “Jesus, feed these poor people;” “Jesus, take care of us” – when **we need to become members of the Body of Christ. We are Christ’s eyes and ears and hands now. We heal the sick; we feed the poor; we spread the good news of God’s love; we become the instruments of God’s grace.**

We become *alter Christus*, “another Christ,” “adopted sons” of the Father. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Rom 8:14) “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.” (Gal 4:6)

On the Christian understanding, the moral life is a participation in the triune life of God – the eternal threefold communion of love that has existed from all eternity. **And at the heart of what we call “grace” is the Spirit’s gift of a share in that eternal, triune love.**

I fear, however, that we sometimes think of “grace” as though it were something like a magic wand that changes us from a frog into a prince, or like the radioactive spider that turns Peter Parker into Spiderman – as though when God’s grace infuses itself into you, you burst with wisdom, light shines out your eyes and ears, and the impurity of sin no longer touches or tempts you.

Perhaps something like this happens to some people, but what if this isn’t what we should expect? A long tradition of wisdom in the Church says we should **not confuse the work of the Holy Spirit with a certain feeling or particular experience. God’s grace often works in ways that are unseen and unnoticed, just as God’s gift of His Son went largely unseen and unnoticed.**

*

So, for example, what if the work of grace in our lives is as unseen and unnoticed as the increase of love in our hearts? Married couples grow in



love. But if they check on it from one day to the next, they probably won't notice much change. If, however, they simply devote themselves to each other's well-being and happiness, they'll wake up one day and realize their love has grown – the love that caused them to devote themselves to one another in the first place.

Parents sometimes report that when they looked upon the face of their newborn baby, they fell in love, and it changed their lives. And yet, that subsequent change of life – from self-centered to selfless and caring – usually takes place over weeks and years, and it usually involves much less of that original “warm fuzzy” feeling. But the Holy Spirit is there throughout the struggle, changing that person's heart, bit by bit, over time. Another mistake we sometimes make is imagining that God's grace always works instantly, like a lightning bolt from Zeus. But there are good reasons

why many of Jesus's parables of the Kingdom involve the planting of seeds and seasons of growth.

Years ago, one of my students asked the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre how she could acquire the virtues, considering that she didn't know anyone who had them. MacIntyre suggested that she could either join the Marines or a New England fishing fleet. The key was to work with others in a situation where your safety and well-being depended on their doing their job well, and their safety and well-being **depended on you doing your job well**. It's an interesting answer, if not always practicable.

In Christian theology, however, in addition to the **"acquired virtues,"** we have a tradition of what are called **"infused virtues."** When we recognize that we don't have the virtues, we can pray for them. I may not have been raised with courage or wisdom or understanding (and I wasn't), but I can pray for them. This doesn't mean I should expect to wake up tomorrow bursting with courage, wisdom, and understanding. Nor does it mean I no longer need to do my part to grow in the virtues of courage, wisdom, and understanding.

Grace doesn't violate nature, but perfects it. God doesn't work this change in us without us. Grace isn't magic; it's love taking root and growing over time to transform those who, like the Virgin Mary, say "yes" to it.

When that grace is doing its work on us, we won't necessarily feel or even notice it. It might appear, at first, like something very natural, like the birth of a child. But isn't that one of the lessons of Christmas: that grace can come into the world largely unnoticed, in places and ways we might never expect and bear fruit in ways that exceed our greatest hopes?

If we decide to devote ourselves to each other's well-being and happiness, God's grace is already at work in us. If we dedicate ourselves to it, that love will grow. It just takes a little faith.

***Image:** Mary's fiat from *The Annunciation* ^[1] by Gerard David, 1506 [The MET, New York]

You may also enjoy:

Rev. Jerry J. Pokorsky's *Rediscovering the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* ^[2]

Msgr. Robert J. Batule's *Mary, Motherhood, and World History* ^[3]

Randall B. Smith is a Professor of Theology at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas. His latest book is From Here to Eternity: Reflections on Death, Immortality, and the Resurrection of the Body.

Article printed from The Catholic Thing: <https://www.thecatholicthing.org>

URL to article: <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2022/12/27/the-gifts-of-the-holy-spirit/>

URLs in this post:

[1] *The Annunciation*: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436096>

[2] *Rediscovering the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*: <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2019/06/09/rediscovering-the-gifts-of-the-holy-spirit/>

[3] *Mary, Motherhood, and World History*: <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2021/12/19/mary-motherhood-and-world-history/>

[Click here to print.](#)

Copyright © The Catholic Thing. All rights reserved.