

Faith of Our Fathers

[A WEEKLY INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG AND OLD.]

GRACE.

First Article: General Remarks on Grace.

1. Grace is the fruit of the Passion of Jesus Christ. He has merited it for us by His precious Blood; and it may be said to flow from His sacred Wounds as from so many inexhaustible fountains.

2. It is a gift that comes from God, the sole Author of grace, and is specially attributed to the Holy Ghost, who is called the Dispenser of graces and of all good gifts.

3. By grace, man fallen by sin is raised again; he recovers all that sin had deprived him of, and is re-established in the supernatural order.

4. The supernatural order comprises two things, viz., a supernatural end and the right means of attaining that end.

(1) The supernatural end of man is beatitude or heavenly glory, which consists in the Beatific Vision of God in heaven. This end is called supernatural, because it is above human nature and all created nature. Man, by his nature, has no more right to aspire to so sublime a destiny than a slave born in a hut has to claim the privileges of the sons of a king in their father's palace.

Having a nature made for earth, man has no right to occupy any other abode than that of earth, there to praise and serve his Creator; but God, by an ineffable mercy, drawing him from his low condition, calls him to dwell with the pure spirits in heaven, in order that he may there, as a child of adoption, enjoy the plenitude of all the riches of His house.

(2) This is the supernatural end; the means of it must also be supernatural, and this means is grace; by grace man becomes worthy of glory.

We must understand that, to be admitted to supernatural glory, man must put on a supernatural form—that is to say, a new form, and, so to speak, a new nature: "He must put off the old man," as the Apostle says, "and put on the new." Just as a poor man, called to dwell with a king in his palace, would be required to change his garments and his manners, the human creature, called by the divine bounty to share His heavenly dwelling-place, must undergo a transformation which changes him into a heavenly creature, worthy of the abode of holiness and the presence of God.

This transformation must be complete, and renovate the whole man—his soul, his body, and his works. His soul, his body, and his works must all become ennobled; must pass from darkness to light, and shine with a divine beauty which is the participation in the splendor of God Himself.

Now all these effects of renovation, of transformation, are worked in man by grace. Grace elevates, purifies, and perfects him; it causes him to become altogether heavenly and fit to enjoy the glory of heaven. Grace is the means that prepares for glory, that conducts to glory; it may even be said that it produces glory, as a seed produces its flower; hence the well-known expression, grace is the seed of glory.

But the question here arises, What is this wonderful agent called grace? What idea are we to form of it in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic faith?

5. Grace, in general, is a supernatural and gratuitous gift granted by God, through the merits of Christ, to His reasonable creatures for their eternal salvation.

6. We distinguish exterior graces from interior graces. The former are the gifts of God existing externally to ourselves, as the Incarnation, the doctrine of Jesus Christ, sermons, spiritual books, good example; the latter are the spiritual gifts which God bestows interiorly on our souls, as faith, hope, charity, etc. It is of interior grace we are about to treat.

7. With regard to the nature of grace, we may say in general 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 hidden life in a seed is the principle of its development and the fruits it will produce, as the life diffused through the members of an animated body is the principle of its beauty and fecundity, so grace, spread throughout the body of the

Church and in its members—that is to say, in our souls—is the invisible principle of their activity, vitality, and spiritual beauty.

8. To understand this doctrine clearly, we must distinguish—(1) actual grace; (2) habitual or sanctifying grace; (3) merit. The first prepares the way for sanctifying grace, or contributes to its increase; sanctifying grace is properly the supernatural life of the soul; merit is the fruit of grace as well sanctifying as actual.

The Persecution Bogey

Refutation of the calumny that freedom for Ireland will mean persecution by the Catholic majority of that country of the Protestant minority was clearly given by Father Cavanaugh, C.S.C., in a sermon at the Cathedral, Detroit, U.S.A., inaugurating the annual Convention of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. He pointed out that "nowhere in all the world has the spirit of religious toleration been more completely triumphant than among the faithful Catholic people of holy Ireland. No Irish hand, in all the centuries of history, ever lighted a faggot to burn a heretic. No martyr was ever sent to the gallows or the block by the Catholics of Ireland; no man was ever flung into prison by any Irish prince or any Irish parliament on account of his religion. Search the long annals of the past and you will find that no unbeliever, or misbeliever, has ever been subjected to penal laws or banished from his home or deprived of his liberty or penalised in any way by the Catholics of Ireland.

"And these beautiful things cannot be said of any other people in all human history. Those who affect to fear that under an independent government in Ireland our non-Catholic brethren would suffer persecution, would do well to meditate those glorious facts. I believe that I merely interpret the feelings of every man and woman of Irish blood when I say that if the establishment of Irish freedom to-morrow meant disabilities for the non-Catholics in the old land, if it meant exclusion from office or discrimination in business, or any kind of social or civil inequality, if it meant reprisals upon non-Catholic neighbors for three hundred years of injustice and persecution, I would rather see the Irish aspirations beaten to the ground and the Irish people manacled for another hundred years than to see the spirit of religious persecution enthroned on the holy hills of Ireland."

New Ireland and Art

Dail Eireann has shown how Ireland maintains her high aims, even in times of anxiety and stress. The appointment of Count Plunkett, T.D., as Minister of Fine Arts, is an act worthy of an artistic people, and marks the high standard of culture that we may expect from a free Ireland. Count Plunkett is well known as a writer and lecturer, and he is a member of the leading Italian academies of art, as well as a life-long worker for Irish Ireland.

For even prayer itself, when it hath not the consort of many voices to strengthen it, is not itself.—St. Basil.

St. Patrick's Church, Raetihi Ireland's Crisis

Ireland's delegates in London to decide Ireland's future. Who with Irish blood and faith is not in breathless anxiety? Who does not hope that Ireland's rights will be fully recognised, and who does not fondly hope and pray that Ireland's women (the bravest of the brave) who stood on Ireland's Calvary, will witness the glory of Ireland's resurrection?

Send an offering to-day to Ireland's Patron, St. Patrick. Ask him to intercede in this crisis and secure freedom for Ireland. Send an offering for St. Patrick's Church, Raetihi.

Donations acknowledged in the *Tablet*.

Address donations to—

FATHER GUINANE,
Ohakune.