

The Year of St. Paul

The Second Letter to the Corin-



It's All About Grace!

Chapter 6: St. Paul continues his defense of himself and his co-workers against those in Corinth who seek to question his authority and his love for the Corinthians. He reminds the Corinthians that he and his ministry has always been careful not to be a stumbling block to their faith. In fact, he reminds them that his vocation to which Christ called him has been filled with many difficulties yet, also gifts of virtue such as patience, which has enabled St. Paul to endure these difficulties, and forbearance, which leads him to continue to keep his “eyes on the prize” which is preaching salvation in Jesus Christ. In continuing his frankness, St. Paul asks the Corinthians to search within themselves to determine where the root of the problems in Corinth are coming from.

In the beginning of this chapter St. Paul suggests that the root may well be that the Corinthians are receiving the grace of God in vain. In other words, are they squandering God's gift of grace? This is an important question for all of us. First, it is important to understand what grace is. As explained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, grace is the “free and undeserved gift that God gives us to respond to our vocation to become his adopted children.” Also, “As sanctifying grace God shares his divine life and friendship with us.” In summation, “Grace” is God's free gift of his very life offered to each one of us. It is by God's grace alone that we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ which works in love. This is why St. Paul urges the Corinthians not to squander and waste this awesome gift of God's divine life.

As Catholics, it is important to understand that through the Catholic Church founded by Christ, God offers the fullness of his grace. Through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition God gives his life through his word. In the teaching authority Jesus gave to his Church, we are given an anchor of grace to keep us firm in our faith and to know what Jesus truly taught and intended rather than being tossed among the waves of each individual interpreting for themselves what Jesus “really” meant. And finally, God imparts his divine life to us in the most visible

and profound way in the Sacraments. While Catholics are richly blessed by having access to the fullness of God's graces freely given to us through Christ's Church, we must also be more aware of the responsibility not to squander God's gift of grace and to remember Jesus' words: “When one is given much, much will be demanded of that person.” Luke 12:48

GOD FIRST

Year Three, Part 25

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Points to Ponder

All Catholics are called to be a holy witness of faith in Jesus Christ. How can we be a more holy witness?

In what ways may our words and conduct prove to be a “stumbling block” to those who are seeking or struggling in faith?

Are we increasingly aware of God's free gift of grace to us?

Do we know what grace is? Can we identify when we encounter this free gift of God? Do we understand the importance of grace?

As Catholics, do we have an adult understanding of our faith so that we may better appreciate both the awesome gift of God's life of grace given to us and the responsibility which comes with accepting this free and undeserved gift?

Children of God. Called to Holiness

Chapter 7: St. Paul stresses to the Corinthians the promise of God that he is not only our God but also our Father. As such, we become more than simply his creation, we become his sons and daughters. In being part of God's family we are thus called to be holy. Like the word grace, we may not be aware what to be holy fully means. To be holy means to be set apart. To be freely self dedicated in the service of God. To be in

the world to help bring witness to God's kingdom through faith and self sacrifice but not to be of the world in terms of being held hostage to what the culture tells us to hold as important.

Despite the problems in Corinth, St. Paul has reason to also rejoice in the Corinthians. Titus visited Corinth and brought back news that he was very well received. Given the hostility and disappointment in St. Paul from some quarters in Corinth, that Titus, St. Paul's co-worker, was well received was indeed good news. By no means was all lost. Even though there has been sorrow and grief on both sides in his relationship with the Corinthians such difficulties can prove to be fruitful after a time because they hopefully lead to self examination and repentance when one comes to see their error. While it was not St. Paul's desire to hurt the Corinthians in his previous letters to them, he could do them no good, in fact, he would do them harm, had he not addressed them frankly and honestly in charity.

Like St. Paul in his letters to Corinth, the Catholic Church often invites criticism for speaking frankly and honestly about what is happening around us. Many people, including some Catholics, resent the constant evaluation of our society by the Church. It is often heard that the Catholic Church is obsessed with such matters as abortion, sexuality and materialism. This is a perception which is turned upside down. The reason the Church must constantly and frankly speak about these matters is not because the Church is obsessed with them, rather, it's because our society is obsessed with them.

Based on what St. Paul wrote about the importance of the need to be frank and honest as a minister of Jesus Christ, is there any doubt that he would tell us as a society that human life is sacred and that 50 million abortions over three decades in this country alone is something we must never support, turn a blind eye or regard as a mere a "choice" of others? Is there any doubt that he would affirm that sexuality is sacred between one man and one woman united as one in marriage and open to life and not an act of self gratification or between two persons of the same gender who are not biologically compatible in regards to the fullness of the purpose for sexual relations? Is there any doubt that he would firmly remind us that the worth of a person is not determined by what that person owns but by who that person is as God's creation in his image and likeness?

Points to Ponder:

Do we see progress in our lives that we are increasing in holiness?

Do we truly desire to be holy?

Are we open to frank and honest self correction by the Church and others?

How can such correction be an act of love?

Why is it important to acknowledge our own sinfulness and need of forgiveness before we can correct others in love?
