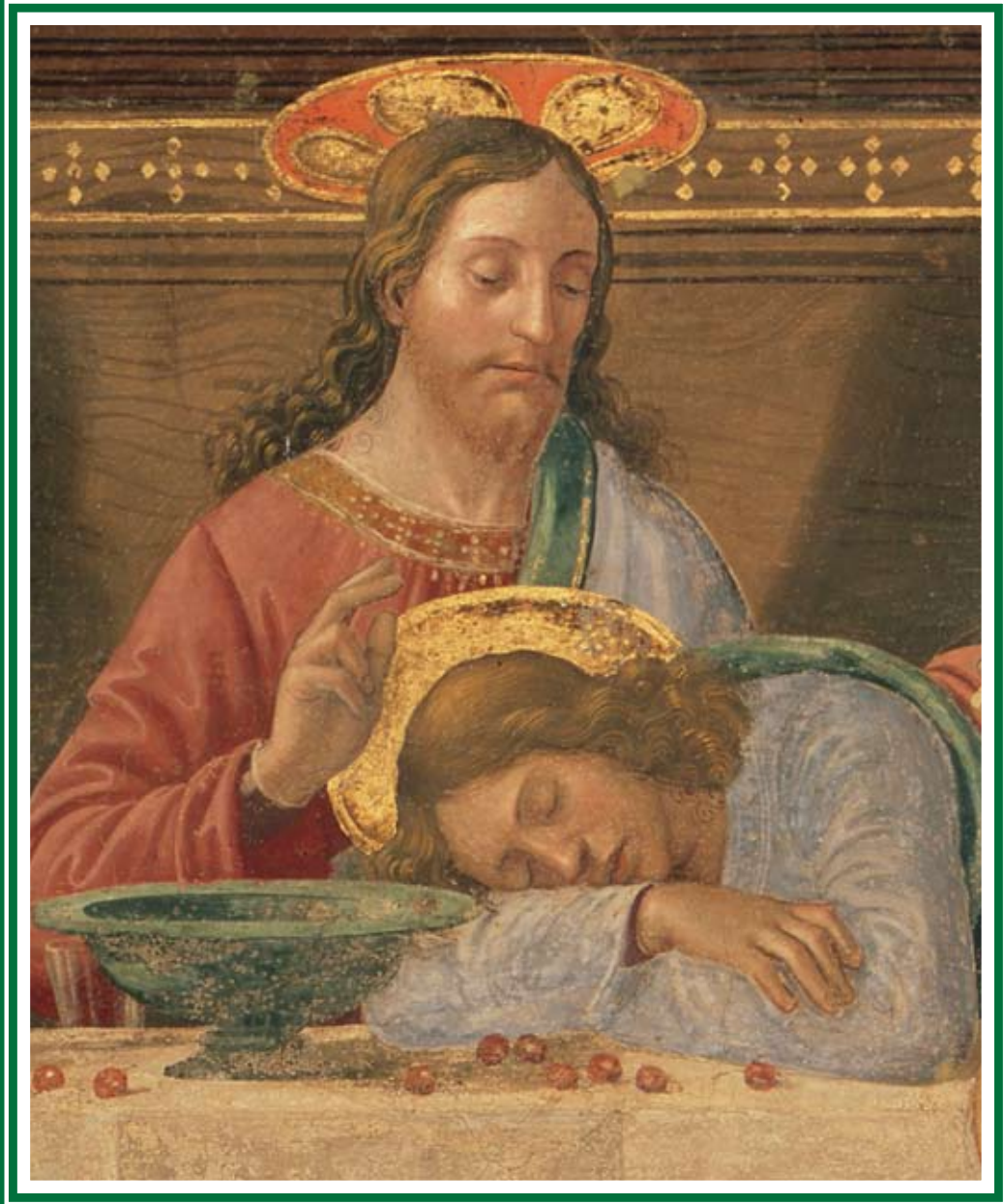


THE LIFE OF GRACE



Faith and Life Series

7

Third Edition

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CHAPTER 13

Doctrine of Grace

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:11

We have learned that God created each one of us to know, love, and serve him on earth, and to live with him forever in heaven. This is the purpose of our lives. So it is very important that we learn *how* to do these things as best we can.

But this is an impossible task for us. How can we, who have been separated from God because of original sin, reach the greatness of heaven? We cannot! That is, we cannot unless God comes to our help with his **grace**.

Grace is a supernatural gift from God given to us through Jesus Christ. It is called **supernatural** because it is far above our natural human powers. It is even above the powers of God's greatest creatures, the mighty angels! It is called a free *gift* because it is something we do not have a right to and something we cannot merit on our own. God gives it to us simply because he loves us.

God's Greatest Gift: Sanctifying Grace

Because of original sin all of us are conceived without the gift of grace in our souls. There have been only two exceptions: Jesus, who being God is always full of grace, and his

mother Mary, who received grace at the moment of her conception in her mother's womb.

Sanctifying grace makes us holy and pleasing to God; it makes us his adopted children and temples of the Holy Spirit. It enables us to live in heaven. This is why it is called God's greatest gift to us. There is only one thing that can ever take this gift away from us: mortal sin.

Sanctifying grace gives us a share in God's life. There are different kinds of life in the world. A living tree has *plant life* by which it can grow, blossom, and bear fruit. A dog has *animal life* that makes it better than a tree. It can see, hear, and move about. People have *human life* that allows us to think, to love, and to communicate ideas. But God's life which comes to us in grace is the greatest of them all, for with it we can live in heaven. Without it we cannot.

Along with giving us a share in God's life, sanctifying grace gives us three supernatural virtues: faith, hope, and charity. We will learn about these in the next chapter.

We receive sanctifying grace in the seven sacraments of the Church. Baptism first gives this new life to our souls and Confirmation



strengthens it. The other sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, deepen this life of God. Penance gives it back to us if we have lost it by mortal sin. Anointing prepares us for physical and spiritual healing or the grace of a happy death.

The Gift of Actual Grace

Another kind of grace gives us all of the day-to-day help that we need in order to do good and avoid evil. **Actual graces** come to us in the form of inspirations that enlighten our minds or move our wills. Some examples of actual graces are the desire to pray or to read

the Bible, and the urge to help someone who is sick or who needs help with homework. Whenever we say yes to these desires and carry out the good works they suggest, we become better Christians and more pleasing to God.

Without the help of actual graces we could not avoid sin or do good works for others. These graces help us to treat other people with respect and show us the way to live a good Christian life.

Words to Know:

grace supernatural
sanctifying grace actual grace

Q. 94 *What is sanctifying grace?*

Sanctifying grace is a supernatural gift which abides in our soul and makes us holy, children of God, and heirs of heaven (CCC 1999).

Q. 95 *If sanctifying grace is lost by mortal sin, how can it be restored?*

Sanctifying grace lost by mortal sin can be restored by receiving the Sacrament of Penance (CCC 1468).

Q. 96 *Is sanctifying grace necessary to go to heaven?*

Yes, sanctifying grace is necessary to go to heaven (CCC 1023).