

2012 - 23rd November _ 4. 4. Grace in Winter

We are here in the land of grace. Grace is always and everywhere available to us. It is only we ourselves who prevent it from transforming us more truly into that image of God in which we were first created. God's gracious gift surrounds us on every side. It is important to remember that grace does not only travel on fine days. On wintry evenings, especially, grace is never far away. By this I mean that very often the greatest strides in holiness are made in the darker happenings of our lives.

Rahner puts the closeness of grace in this way :

'Grace is simply the last depth and radical meaning of all that the created person experiences, enacts and suffers in the process of developing and realising himself as a person. When someone experiences laughter or tears, bears responsibility, stands by the truth, breaks through the egoism in his life with other people; where someone hopes against hope, faces the shallowness and stupidity of the daily rush and bustle with humour and patience, refusing to become embittered; where someone learns to be silent and in this inner silence lets the evil die rather than spread outwards; in a word, where someone lives as he would like to live, combating his own egoism and the continuing temptation to inner despair – there is the event of grace.' (Karl Rahner, 'Secular Life and the Sacraments', TheTablet vol225 no 6822, 1971, p27).

Some people sense this exciting shift in the dynamic of grace with open wonder, joy and thanksgiving; others struggle with it. Grace has been offered to the world from the very beginning of its existence, by virtue of the fact that it is created as a potential recipient of divinity. Grace is, therefore, available always everywhere, at least as an offer. The love of God does not become less a miracle by the fact that it is given to everyone. This extravagant offer is without conditions. St. Benedict, in his advice to the cellarer of the monastery (Chapter 32 of his Rule)states that the person chosen by the abbot should 'regard all the utensils and goods of the monastery as sacred as the vessels of the altar.' The search for God is no longer a dualistic journey outwards; it is the recognition of what is already throbbing within us. That is what we celebrate in the sacraments. It is divine power that energises our daily lives. Grace is life fully lived. God's basic gift to us is the lives we live and the good earth from which we make our living.

(Passion for the Possible pp 20, 21, 22)