

Grace for all Seasons Week Beginning 22nd June

In Christ our humanity has undergone transformation. This transformation is not something added on to our nature – a divine layer on top of our humanity. It is rather the revelation of the intrinsic meaning of our lives. We are God's dream coming true. We are God's delight. God rejoices in our humanity and God is the energy behind every heartbeat of our lives. Another way of putting this is to discern the activity of grace within our souls.

At our very centre is the address of the Holy Spirit. God has taken up residence in our innermost place. We forget that the old distinction between the holy and the human has been overcome in the person of Christ. In Christ it is revealed that God's home is now in people. In him it is made clear that God speaks in and through the words and actions of all God's creatures. Our prayer and sacramental worship are the necessary means of remembering and celebrating this profound truth . . .

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 gifts surround 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.

In an article in *The Tablet*, 'Secular Life and the Sacraments' (Vol225, no 6822, march 1971), 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 in his heart die rather than spread outwards; in a word, where someone lives as he would like to live, combating his own egoism and the continual temptation to inner despair – there is the event of grace.' (p237)

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 and 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 . . .

For many of us, nature and grace are still seen as two distinct entities. The image of the world that this suggests is that of a two-storey house, where grace and nature are on separate levels, grace building on nature, but never really belonging to it or penetrating it. Today we are asked to make a 'paradigm shift', a total change in perspective, whereby the secular world is from the outset and always encompassed and permeated with the grace of God's self-communication.

God invites us, and every part of the cosmos, to enter into communion with the divine self, according to its own capacity. In his massive work *Theological Investigations*, Rahner wrote, 'The world is permeated by the grace of God ... The world is constantly and ceaselessly possessed by grace from its innermost roots ... Whether the world knows it or not, this is so.' (Vol 14, p166)

(*Treasured and Transformed* pp 126,127, 128)