



HIGHLIGHTS FOR TALK 4

WHAT DO I NEED TO GET TO HEAVEN? GRACE AND VIRTUE

- ❖ Grace -- defined as “a participation in the life of God” (CCC 1997) -- is a supernatural gift from God that helps us attain eternal salvation.
- ❖ Grace supports and strengthens our virtues and increases our ability to love in the way God loves. If we cooperate with grace and take advantage of its help to grow in love, we can become more holy.
- ❖ Holiness, or sanctity, is the quality of being God-like, insofar as we are able. It is having a finite measure of resemblance to God, who is infinite Love and infinite Holiness.
- ❖ As creatures, we have a limited capacity for love. Without grace, we would never be able to set out on this grand spiritual adventure, because the heights of supernatural love are impossible for us without it.
- ❖ Because of human weakness and our tendency toward sin, it is difficult for us (we have to struggle) to respond to grace and to choose to do what is good.
- ❖ While God is constantly sending us many graces, He also regularly allows us to suffer. Suffering purifies the heart of its selfish tendencies and allows it to do the job of loving better. When God allows us to suffer, He is not being mean or cruel. On the contrary, He is very close to us during these times, helping us to accept what He is allowing for our own good and for the good of others.
- ❖ As a share in God’s own life, grace is a priceless gift. God gives it to us out of generous love.
- ❖ The help of God’s grace does not coerce, or force, us to do anything. Grace helps us to love truly -- but we are entirely free to accept or reject the graces God sends us.
- ❖ There are two forms of grace: sanctifying grace and actual grace.
- ❖ Sanctifying grace is the heart and core of the supernatural life. It is our share in the divine “likeness” that makes us just and pleasing to God. Because of its essential role in the life of our souls, we can think of sanctifying grace as our “passport” to heaven. We must do anything it takes to protect and keep it.
- ❖ God gives us the gift of sanctifying grace when we receive the Sacrament of Baptism. At that moment, an entirely new dimension is added to our lives, because God Himself begins to dwell within us.
- ❖ A person who has the gift of sanctifying grace within him is said to be in “the state of grace”. The horrifying thing about mortal sin is that it removes us from the state of grace.
- ❖ God forbid, but if we ever do fall into mortal sin, there is NO reason to despair of recovering sanctifying grace, because Divine Mercy is boundless! No matter what sin we’ve committed, God is ready to forgive us and restore us to grace if we express genuine sorrow in the Sacrament of Confession.



Moms Transmit the Faith

- ❖ We must not allow suffering to destroy our spirit or our faith. God never sends us more suffering than we can bear, and He gives every soul He creates sufficient grace to get to heaven.
- ❖ Actual graces are “secondary” helps from God. They are temporary impulses that God gives to a soul to help protect her (or another) from evil and encourage her (or another) toward what is good.
- ❖ We can receive actual graces regularly through prayer and the sacraments. We can also receive them through fasting, almsgiving, and the good example or advice of others. Actual grace can operate in the mind, in the will, or in one’s passions/affections/desires -- or in all three.
- ❖ The supernatural life of grace sustains man’s life of virtue. “A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good” (CCC 1803).
- ❖ We need the help of actual grace to fulfill any kind of good work. We never do anything good all by ourselves. God is actually responsible for all the good that we do, but we are responsible for cooperating with His grace in choosing to do it.
- ❖ Human virtues draw upon our own effort and the practice of good works that lie on the natural level. Just a few examples are cheerfulness, order, humor, obedience, friendliness, and honesty...
- ❖ Human virtues serve to “govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith” (CCC 1804).
- ❖ There are four “cardinal virtues” that play a pivotal role in one’s moral life: prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. All of the other human virtues stem from these four.
- ❖ All of the human virtues are finally rooted in the three supernatural, or “theological”, virtues of faith, hope, and charity. The supernatural virtues are infused into the soul at Baptism along with sanctifying grace.
- ❖ A person’s virtues are “completed and perfected” by the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord.
- ❖ Church tradition also notes twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.