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UNCREATED GRACE (Part Five)

“Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” the Second Epistle of Peter exhorts us (3:18). This growth involves healing, bringing wholeness and well-being to our wounded human nature. It lifts us beyond where we are in our natural humanity—so far beyond that we dare to say it deifies us. In our natural being, we already image God who has made us in the divine likeness, but through grace we share in the very Sonship of the Eternal Word. We are given a kind of capacity to know the Father as the Divine Word knows the Father. John of the Cross writes in the *Spiritual Canticle* of “transformation in the Three Persons (of the Trinity) in power, wisdom, and love and thus the soul is like God....He created her in His image and likeness” (Stanza 39, #4).

Yet the ineffable gift of sanctifying grace involves more than our transformation. The very basis of the holiness effected within us by grace is an Indwelling God Who now inhabits our being. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit take up their abode and we possess them through grace as guests who will not leave us. God belongs to us not as in the plenitude of heaven but by the limited power of faith and in the expectation of hope. This abiding reality is what theologians call Uncreated Grace, our God-within-us.

John of the Cross says in the *Living Flame of Love*, “There is no reason to marvel at God granting...gifts to souls He decides to favor. If we consider that He is God and that He bestows them as God with infinite love and goodness” (Prologue, # 2.). God is not an inactive guest. John explains in a later passage, “The Blessed Trinity inhabits the soul by divinely illuminating its intellect with the wisdom of the Son, delighting its will in the Holy Spirit, and absorbing it powerfully and mightily in the unfathomed embrace of the Father’s sweetness” (St. 1:15).

St. Thérèse of Lisieux writes in her autobiography of “the heaven of our soul, made to God’s image, the living temple of the adorable Trinity” (*Story of a Soul* p. 104) and in a letter to her sister Celine, “What does it matter if we be without gifts that sparkle exteriorly since within us the King of Kings shines with all His glory. How great must a soul be to contain a God” (LT 165, p 863). This greatness is communicated to us by the Three Who dwell inwardly.

Born anew in the power of the Spirit, I now relate to God as more than a mere creature. I have entered into the divine family of the Trinity. Through the Eternal Word who is Son of the Father, I, too, have become a child of God. This divine adoption makes me share in what constitutes the very nature of God and thus establishes me in a fellowship of love with God as a child knows and loves its parent. At the same time, I am united in a fellowship of love with all other human beings and with the whole created world of nature that surrounds me.

The Divine Guests Who live interiorly invite me through grace to walk a path of increased virtue, pointing out the route to greater holiness. St. Thérèse writes, "God showed me clearly, without my perceiving it, the way to please Him and to practice the most sublime virtues. I have frequently noticed that Jesus doesn't want me to lay up provisions. He nourishes me at each moment with a totally new food. I find it within me without my knowing how it is there." She is telling us that the relationship with God which grace initiates, brings untold treasures but also obligations to live now on a higher plane of being and behavior.

She goes on, "I believe it is Jesus himself hidden in the depths of my poor little heart. He is giving me the grace of acting within me, making me think of all He desires me to do" (*SS* p 165). This is not a special grace reserved for Thérèse. The inspirations of grace are whispering to each one of us and maybe sometimes shouting.

A heavenly energy suffuses our spirit, calling us to be instruments of renewal for the reign of God. Each day opens up possibilities for deeper union with Jesus even if the hours may seem ordinary and prosaic. A divine voice invites us to pay heed to the indwelling Presence always accessible. Grace keeps us alert to that voice.

When the world outside us seems heavy laden with darkness and even horror, we turn to our interior refuge where the Divine Three communicate a calm that surpasses understanding. "In truth and love, we shall have grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son" (2 Jn 1:3). Having been given so much, we long that others may find within themselves such treasures too. God wants to use us as instruments for spreading this blessedness.

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