

Four Ways to Respond to the Gift of Grace

As you manage the usual busyness of your day—paying bills, making dinner, getting the oil changed in your car—consider this: At every hectic or mundane moment, you are invited to participate in the life of God.

This can seem almost too much to take in, but it's true. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines grace as "a participation in the life of God." Because God pours forth grace to each of us at every moment according to our needs and our situation in life, all through our day the Creator of the universe is freely inviting us to share his life.

We know what it means to participate in the life of another. Married couples enter that state when, brimming with love, they commit to one another "for better or for worse." Parents participate in the life of another when, filled with awe, they realize a new life is on the way. Family life is all about participating in the life of others; and at its best, it is full of grace.

The Catechism also says that grace is free and undeserved help. We cannot earn grace, but it is up to us to acknowledge and accept it.

Here are four ways to open your life to grace:

1. **Ask for what you need.**

In the prayer Jesus taught us, we ask for daily bread, forgiveness, and guidance on the way. You might ask for the grace to deal better with a difficult person at work. Or pray for the grace to be kinder when your child asks "why" for the umpteenth time. Don't be afraid to ask.

2. **Ask with an open mind.**

Be willing to let go of your own agenda and say yes to the grace God offers. Don't hand God your game plan and say, "Here are my ideas, and I'm counting on you to do your part." Remember, "Thy (meaning God's) will be done."

3. **Watch for the ways God responds.**

Grace often arrives in surprising ways. Through prayer and being aware, you can learn to recognize God at work in your life. One of the surest signs of God's grace: a feeling of gratitude and a desire to give to others.

4. **Pass it on!**

When we love one another, we pass on God's life to others. Having been blessed, we can bless others in our family, at work, in our community. Having been forgiven, we can forgive others. Having been strengthened, we can share our strength. Grace is not meant to be hoarded and stored. It's meant to touch the lives of others.

When you move through your day buoyed by God's grace, it can spill over into the lives of your spouse, your child, all those in whose lives you participate. Grace is truly the gift that keeps giving.