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The Supremacy of Grace: the new challenge for the third millenium

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TEACHING OUTLINE

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3. *The Newness and richness of grace*
4. *The tremendous grace of Renewal in the Spirit*
5. *Grace, great challenge for the Third Millenium*
6. *Living in confidence*

1. The reign of the law : a failure

When God freed his people from slavery in Egypt, he gave them his law, the ten words of life, to show them how to remain free and happy. God wanted those words imprinted in their heart. Look today I am putting forward you life and bliss, death and misfortune blessings or curse. So choose life so that you and your prosperity may live (Dt 30, 15-19). The Law, which is a teaching tool, had to educate the covenant people gradually do that they might live loving God and each other. However, the chosen people proved to be an unruly group. Facing the ordeals of the desert, they grumbled about God, preferring the fatty meat of Egypt to the milk and honey of the promised land. They dismissed God's way and, later, like the heathens, asked for a king .

The choice of Israel is based not on any merit or good behaviour, but only on God's love and constancy to the oath he swore to their ancestors (Dt 7, 8).

God did not get the answer He expected from His people because men who have sold out to sin are radically unable to do as God wishes. Fortunately, God's gift of grace in Jesus Christ has brought the solution.

2. The Supremacy of grace

With God Everything is grace Bernanos said. He is a God of tenderness and grace, slow to anger, rich in mercy and faithfulness (Ex 34, 6). His inexhaustible justice secures for everybody their rights to the full and gratifies their aspirations by giving them peace and joy.

Jesus is the supreme gift of the Father. In Him, grace became visible to our eyes, God present in our midst in whom the Father's

kindly plan was fulfilled by the Holy Spirit, the most excellent gift which glorifies Jesus (John 16, 14). The supremacy of grace in comparison to the Law comes from the supremacy of Christ, dead on a cross, whom the Father raised high by giving him the Name which is above all names. (Ph.2, 9).

3. The newness and richness of grace

God give us everithing we need freely without consideration of our merits, to enable us to do His will.

Nations today proclaim individual rights but can't put an end to injustice. Many people are deprived of happiness; forgotten and humiliated. The numbers who starve, who are jobless, who are refugees, who are murdered innocents, keep increasing. Now, God gives according to our needs. Jesus has come to save, not the upright, but sinners. His grace overflows where sin has proliferated. He gratifies the labourer who comes at the eleventh hour, He honours Zacchaeus, the tax collector, and He forgives the insolvent debtor unconditionally.

The Richness of the Spirit: So that the man with a stubborn heart can give God his gratitude and love, devote his life and soul to Him and practice the commandments, God will give him a new heart and send him His Spirit, who stays with him.

Now this is the challenge. God is asking us to dare to believe that, with our collaboration, the almighty, working in us, will produce charitable works and transform us: that Jesus dwells and acts in us through the Holy Spirit, who grants us gifts and charisms with which to evangelise, to drive out devils, to heal the sick and to establish love and civilisation in Jesus name. Thus, the effusion of the Holy Spirit fills us with the power to serve Christ and the world.

4. The tremendous grace of Renewal in Spirit.

Patti Mansfield defines effusion as an inner transforming experience in which we realise God's presence . She reports these words of Raniero Cantalamessa : 'I've known two lives , one before effusion, the other after . Talking about effusion to





his students, a theology teacher told them : write this first : it is an immense grace which restores power in the Holy Spirit and re-establishes Jesus supremacy.

Evangelise with conviction and testify merrily in both my professional and family life. It has also enabled me to meet trials, sufferings, temptations and devilish attacks, triumphantly. The Holy Spirit is the greatest need of the Church today, said Pope John Paul II who also declared that Renewal in

the Spirit is good luck for the Church and the World and therefore a main asset for the third millenium.

5. God's grace, the greatest challenge.

Nowadays, people are worried about future prospects. The Constitutions of States and civilians codes define duties, rights and penalties. People rely on their scientific and technical performance and not on love and mercy. They turn down God for their institutions, schools, families and education. They think they can do as they please and become slaves of their gadgets, exposed to economic and financial disasters, victims of bribery, violence, terrorists and drugs. They encourage abortion, protect the rich and hand the poor over to famine, war and AIDS. Searching for happiness and freedom the sinful exhaust themselves and backslide into sin despite the wonderful works of God's charity.

Is the grace of renewal in the Spirit also runing out? What has become of the use of the gifts of power, of evangelisation, of courage and of holiness?

For the new evangelisation and the preparatory jubilee leading into the third millenium, God invited us to choose again between life and death. Now Jesus is telling us again Be courageous, I have conquered the world (John 16, 33) my grace

is stronger than sin, confusion, hatred, fright and death. Come up to me!

6. Call to live in confidence

The aim of God's commandments is to establish our societies on a sound basis. They are neither abolished nor outdated. Man's heart must let itself transform. To God's plan of happiness, two attitudes are possible : either trust or mistrust and suspicion. Doubting God's true intentions is our biggest weakness. God's grace is a royal present and not a loan to be paid back. Let's decide to live in confidence, providence and love. Even if we have laboured all night long or for many years, without taking anything, let's throw our nets again on Jesus' fruitful word, source of abundance and Joy.

Practical decisions

Welcome God's grace today, in praises. For this, live in a state of grace, always ready to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Doubt God no longer, open yourself Ephata , open your ears, listen carefully, practise quietly the law for life. Open your heart, forgive those who are in debt to you and humble yourself before God. Offer succour to the poor around you.

Don't rely on your own power to dominate the earth and master it (Gn,1, 26).

In any situation, utter praises, celebrate the glory of God's Name, offer a thanksgiving sacrifice to glorify God who said 'To the upright I will show God's salvation' (Ps 50, 23). 



Questions for discussion

1. *Do we obey God's commandments because we are afraid of punishment, for a reward or because we love him as a son loves his father?*
2. *Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? Are you filled with the Holy Spirit? If not, how do you live with God's grace?*
3. *Diagnose the situation in your country or your continent. Does it need God's grace?*

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