



Happy Feast Day!

Dedicated in 1874, St. Patrick's Church in Mt. Morris has one of its 12 stained glass windows honoring its patron saint. A close-up of the window, installed more than 50 years ago, shows St. Patrick holding a replica of the church building. The saint, bishop of the primatial See of Armagh, is honored on this day across the world.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

Grace: The Effect Of Covenant

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Jn. 3/14-21. (R1) 2 Chr. 36/14-16, 19-23. (R2) Eph. 2/4-10.

In the past three Sundays of Lent, we saw how the first readings dealt with covenant — the covenants with Noah, Abraham and Moses. Paul, in the second reading, describes the effect of covenant — "grace."

Perhaps one of Paul's greatest theological contributions to Christianity was his treatment of grace. The Epistle to the Ephesians is a mini-treatise on grace.

Paul tells the Ephesians that it is grace that makes all the difference in the world. Constantly, on TV we are bombarded with advertisements with "before" and "afters." Needless to say, the after is always better. In fact, it is nothing short of the miraculous, or so we are led to believe.

By using the products named, a transformation takes place. The overweight become slender if they use Slim Pills; bald heads can be covered with forests of hair

so wavy as to make one feel seasick if only they use a bottle of Hirsute; arthritic fingers will fly over piano keys when one takes Nimble. The list is endless.

In Ephesians, Paul is concerned with before and afters. There is a transformation. Unlike modern advertising, however, the transforming agent — grace — is not purchased: it is a gift, undeserved, freely given, by a God "rich in mercy." "By His favor you were saved."

Grace is a gift that puts the world in proper relationship to God. It is one of the great New Testament words. From God's viewpoint, "grace" is God's charity, His love for us, that impels Him to favor us. It is the gracious element in God toward us that prompted Him to make covenants with man; contracts, as though we were on equal terms with Him; contracts, to do good things for us, to give us His blessings.

From our viewpoint, grace means the effect of this graciousness of God toward us. First, there is the miraculous inner transformation in our very being — "because of His great love for us He brought us to life with Christ when we were

dead; after the touch of His graciousness, we are brought to life. In theology we label this life, penetrating and permeating our very being so that we are truly reborn and become children of God "sanctifying grace."

A mother relates how her young daughter tried to make noodles and somehow messed up on the recipe. The mother and daughter reviewed the instructions and learned what went wrong and discovered that the little girl had used sugar instead of salt. With a few deft substitutions, the experienced mother did a seemingly miraculous thing; she helped the girl rescue the project by making sponge cake out of the ingredients. That's what God's grace does in human life: it makes good what was not so good; it makes the dead come alive.

But life is for living. All life is given to us so that we might "lead the life of good deeds." God's graciousness meant to make us gracious and graceful, is meant to impart to life and living the wonderful, undefinable something that makes life worth living, namely "charm."

Dante expressed grace in his Beatrice. She was a symbol reminding us that the noblest virtues appear only in the form of gracious charm. Her smile is the power that without effort achieves the most striking results.

God's grace is all that is beautiful in life, all that makes life beautiful, all the loveliness that flows from the goodness and loving kindness which He Himself has poured into us.

Service Scheduled

The Southeast Region will sponsor a Lenten prayer service at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 21, at Guardian Angels Church, 2081 East Henrietta Road.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will lead the service.

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