



Bible Study

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Year B

St. Maria Goretti, St.
Augustine and St.
Peter Claver Parishes

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And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." NABRE Lk. 1: 28

Reading I: 2 Sam. 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR GRACE? *"If, in your relationship with the Lord, you do not feel that He loves you tenderly, you are missing something, you still have not understood what grace is, you have not yet received grace which is this closeness." These words of Pope Francis illustrate that grace or favor is a free gift from God. It is something we do not earn or produce. Grace is amazing, since it is so transforming. Grace provides enthusiasm to do God's will, which allows us to live in the joy of the Most High God. Grace saves us from this world and from ourselves as it provides an opportunity to see the world and ourselves, as God sees us. The appropriate response to favor or grace is faith. The fulfillment of grace in the human soul is elegantly portrayed in the words of the hymn, Amazing Grace: "How precious did the grace appear the hour I first*



**AMAZING GRACE,
HOW SWEET THE SOUND ...**

believed." Are you looking for God's favor this Advent? Look no further than your Baptism and the sacraments. We have found favor with God. He dwells in and among us. What are you looking for?

David found favor with God because of his charity and fidelity to God. He wanted to build a temple for God out of cedar, like the palace he had built for himself. God's favor or grace for David was revealed by Nathan in what is called the Dynastic Oracle. The Oracle establishes a paternal relationship between David and God (v. 14; see Ps 2:7; 89:27). David was told, in effect, not to bother building a house for the Lord; rather, the Lord will make a dynasty for him, the House of David. Not only will he have descendants (v. 12) who will sit upon the throne of Israel (v. 13), but their rule will last forever (vv. 13, 16). Even if they break the Lord's commands, the line of David will never be removed from kingship, as Saul was (1 Sm 13; 15). The Dynastic Oracle is the basis for Jewish expectations of an anointed king (1 Sm. 12:3, 5, Mt 21:9; cf. Acts 2:30; Heb 1:5). That prophecy was fulfilled in Mary's Son, the Messiah. It was David's love for God that allowed grace to pour into his soul. If you are looking for grace, fall in love with God. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** Why was David favored by God? What can we expect, if we imitate David's loyalty?

The Catholic Catechism teaches that Favor is Grace.

1996 Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.

1997 Grace is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an "adopted son" he can henceforth call God "Father," in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church.

Reading II: Romans 16:25-27

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR GRACE? These words of St. Paul were selected to remind us of the grace that God bestowed on all mankind by coming to live with and be like us through His Son Jesus Christ. We did not deserve it but He freely gave us Himself.

Verses 25—27 are a doxology or formula for praise and worship. It is St. Paul's method of ending the letter to the Romans and briefly repeats the main points of the doctrine explained in the letter.

This letter is different from other letters of St. Paul. He had never been to the churches in Rome, though he intended to visit them. The churches were founded by others whom he evangelized personally, or through one of his companions.

The key phrase in the doxology may be "... to bring about the obedience of faith." The phrase appears in Rom. 1:5 and probably means the obedience that is faith. This phrase stands at the beginning and at the end of the letter, holding together its theme of faith and entrusting oneself to God. Faith is a gift that inspires love, which is the basis of living in the grace of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:17, Heb. 11:6). What are you looking for? **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Is there a relationship between love of God, grace and faith?

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR GRACE? Many of us crave approval, acceptance or special benefits. When we receive these gifts from God, we have found His favor. It is by God's grace that we live and move and have our being.

There is a close association between favor, grace, and mercy. Biblically, these concepts seem to be derived from one Hebrew word, and likewise, translated into Greek that also maintained the single word origin, *charis* or *ξηφια*. The grace or favor that we receive from God is free. It depends on God's pleasure and is extended in response to a righteous and prayerful life. The righteousness of Noah and Moses (**Gen 6:8; Ex 33:12-13**) allowed them to receive favor and honor from the Lord (**Ps 84:11**). When Moses blessed the twelve tribes, he referenced his ancestor, Joseph's prosperity and fruitfulness as examples of God's grace. (**Deut 33:16**). Gabriel told Mary (**Lk 1:30**) that she had "found favor with God" and would bear the Christ-child. When Christ was born, the angelic host announced to the shepherds that God would send "peace to men on whom His favor rests" (**Lk 2:14**). His birth shows that God's favor rests on us.

St. Luke, a Gentile, found favor with God and was converted to Christianity by St. Paul around the year 50 A.D. He wrote for Gentile converts and explained details which Jewish readers would have had already known. His infancy narrative of Jesus is punctuated by the joyful revelation of God's grace to mankind by becoming one of us. The angel's greeting, "Hail full of grace," is better translated as, "*rejoice favored one*" (**v. 28**). Mary, therefore, was chosen to be the virgin mother of the Messiah who was predicted in the first reading. Both Mary and Joseph were from the house of David. Jesus is the Davidic King.

Mary was indeed favored by God. This is the only biblical instance where an angel calls someone by a title rather than by their name (**v. 28**). The Greek word *KECHARITOMENE* (*κεξηφιατομνε*) used in this verse is best translated "*one who was always full of grace.*" This means that God had already graced Mary before her encounter with the angel. Note that Mary's fear was overcome by God's grace (**vv. 29-36**).

Luke's annunciation story proclaims Mary's lifelong holiness. God is her "Savior" (**1:47**). The name *Jesus* means *Yahweh saves*. Mary was so favored, that she was preserved from sin from her conception. Her response to God's grace was a loving "Yes". Our response to God's grace is to love God. If we are looking for God's grace, we must love God and love each other. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** How will you find God's favor? What do the sacraments have to do with God's grace?

PRAY ABOUT IT!

Monday

Read Lk 1:30. Spend 15 minutes in silent prayer. Give a gift of peace to someone.

Tuesday

List three things for which you are grateful.

Wednesday

Read Rom. 16: 25-27. Spend 15 minutes offering prayers of thanksgiving.

Thursday

Read Lk. 1:28. Give a gift to someone you don't know.

Friday

Tell someone what God has done in your life.

NATHAN

Nathan was a prophet during the reign of David and Solomon. Nathan told David that he would not be the one to build the Temple (1 Chron 17:1-15). Using the parable of the "one little ewe lamb," Nathan confronted David ("You are the man!") with his double sin, the murder of Uriah the Hittite and his adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife (2 Sam 12:1-15). Nathan, as the Lord's official prophet, named Solomon Jedidiah, which means "Beloved of the Lord" (2 Sam 12:25). Nathan was also involved in David's arrangement of the musical services of the sanctuary (2 Chron 29:25). When David was near death, Nathan advised Bathsheba to tell David of the plans of David's son Adonijah to take the throne. Bathsheba related the news to David, who ordered that Solomon be proclaimed king (1 Kings 1:8-45). Nathan apparently wrote a history of David's reign (1 Chron 29:29) and a history of Solomon's reign (2 Chron 9:29).

Resources: <http://catholicpoint.blogspot.com/2012/09/kecharitomene.html>
The Gospel of John The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, Revised Standard Version Second Catholic Edition, Ignatius Press San Francisco CA, 2010; pp 162-163; Romans, Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, Ignatius Press 2010. San Francisco. CA. 2010 pp 255 & 281; Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year B, 2018, Bryan Schmisek, Diana Macalinal, and Jay Cormier, Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 16-19; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-The-Sunday-Readings>, Cycle B, Kevin O'Sullivan, O.F.M. Franciscan Herald Press 1971, pp 16-23; Nathan: Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers; Gabriel, Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

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