

Faith Tidbits...

*a little food for thought
and some knowledge
about your Catholic faith*

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This monthly series will answer questions you always wondered about or questions you never even thought to ask... all about our Catholic Faith. If you have a question you want answered, call Diane Hardick at 633-3672.

What is “Grace”?

Richard McBrien in his book, *Catholicism*, states that Grace has never had a single meaning in Catholic theology or doctrine. Grace is the abiding presence of God – God’s self-communication that enables us to live holy lives. It is in and through God’s Grace and our openness to that Grace that allows us to participate in the divine life of God. Grace is a gift given in love to us by God. St. Paul speaks of Grace as the goodwill of God as he uses it in his letters in the introduction and final greeting: *Grace be with you*. The *Catechism* defines Grace as “the free and undeserved gift of God that helps us to respond to our vocation as his adopted children.” It is in and through God’s Grace that we are transformed into the person God created us to be. One theologian and psychologist said that Grace was the most powerful force in the universe. If we open our lives fully to this gift God has given us, then we can do great things in and through God. As the song Amazing Grace says, “T’was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.”

Besides the changes it brought about in the Church, why was Vatican II such a unique Council of the Church?

Vatican II was the 21st Council of the Church and unique in many ways. First of all, it was the largest Council in terms of numbers. There were 737 in attendance at Vatican I, while 2600 bishops from all over the world came to participate in Vatican II. There were 2908 bishops eligible to come, but some bishops could not leave their Communist countries for fear of not being able to return. Secondly, Vatican II was unique in that it was the first council of the Church to have electric lights, telephones and typewriters. It was also the first Council to be covered by television, radio, newspapers and magazines from all over the world. Vatican II signified the Catholic Church’s movement toward a genuine world Church. Almost every major Christian Church was also represented at the Council. Pope John XXIII felt called by God to announce the Council because he said the Church needed to read “the signs of the times” to better accomplish the Mission of Jesus Christ in the modern world.

What are the foundations of Catholic Social Justice?

The starting point for Catholic Social Justice is the human dignity of every human person. Every human person was created in the divine image of God and is a child of God. Our worth as a human being is rooted in who we are, not in where we live, what job we have or the color of our skin. We speak of “Social” Justice because our lives are a web of relationships. We live in relationship with all of humanity because we live in a covenant relationship with God who said, “I will be your God and you shall be my people.” The word justice is derived from the Latin word which means “right.” Justice is concerned with rights—a power that we have to do all things necessary for achieving the end or purpose for which we are destined as rational and free persons. Some of the rights include the right to life, the right to a worthy manner of living, the right to a basic education, the right to gainful employment and the right to worship God freely. Social Justice calls us to apply the Gospel to the structures, systems and institutions of society which are the framework in which all human relationships take place. To live justly is to be open to all the world as gift and to God as mystery.