

What is Grace?

Anybody who has read the New Testament is aware that Grace from God is important for us as Christians, and in particular that it has a role to play in our salvation. It is mentioned often by St. Paul and addressed frequently by Jesus. And the fact that Grace does exist in our lives and is given to us by God is something that is ecumenical in spirit: both Catholics and Protestants understand that this Grace, this free gift from God that saves us from ourselves, is essential of the life we are called to live as His children.

WHAT IS GRACE?

Grace is what is given to us by God so that we might attain eternal life; it is impossible for us to attain eternal life apart from God's grace, and it is solely due to God's grace that we can be saved and enter into Heaven.

There are two kinds of grace that a given person can receive. The first is Actual Grace, which is given to us when God acts in a particular moment in time; it is not continuous and does not stay with us. An example of Actual Grace would be a particular form of enlightenment you may receive about an issue during a moment of prayer to God. It is an instantaneous experience that pushes you to act.

The other kind of grace is called Sanctifying Grace. Sanctifying Grace is grace that is developed inside of us. Unlike Actual Grace which is a momentary act, Sanctifying Grace is a state of being that our soul becomes infused with by the Holy Spirit on account of Christ's sacrifice for the remission of our sins. It is Sanctifying Grace that is the basis for our salvation and is infused in us upon our Baptism.

DO CATHOLICS TEACH THAT WE ARE SAVED BY OUR WORKS OR BY GOD'S GRACE?

Almost all Protestants believe in salvation by *faith alone*. This means that, according to Protestants, while works may play a role in the identification of a true believer, works do not play a role in our salvation. Thus when they see Catholics and their emphasis on works and how it affects their salvation, many Protestants believe that Catholics teach that we are saved by our own works apart from God's grace.

While such Protestants are absolutely right to condemn a works-based salvation in the way it is phrased above (since it is contrary to the Holy Word of God), they are incorrect to assert that this is part of Catholic Church teaching. Though we do differ from Protestants in our proclamation of the importance of works for salvation, we do not differ from them in the importance of Grace for our salvation.

(See the Catechism, paragraph 1996-2011 for more info on grace).

Article Source: <http://www.catholic365.com/article/6115/the-catholic-understanding-of-grace.html>