

Well, it is no longer six days or 48 hours but I have been a priest for three weeks. The ordination weekend was a whirlwind. It felt like I got married three times. People wonder, how did you sleep the night before? I slept like a baby! Were you stressed at all? Nope. How did you feel before/during the ordination? I felt so much peace like I was drinking oceans of grace straight out of heaven. Thank you to everyone for all your prayers and support from the bottom of my heart. This is where I am supposed to be. I am beginning to fulfill what God had planned from all eternity!

These last three weeks have been a grace. I have seen such an outpouring of love for me but particularly for the priesthood. The faithful still believe in the priesthood despite all the scandals, despite all the shortcomings, you still believe in the priesthood.

And today we are privileged to have some seminarians here who desire to aspire to the priesthood, who still believe that it is worth giving up everything for. Please shower them with the love that you have shown to me, to encourage them and to show them that we still need priests.

I've been reflecting on these past three weeks, and although I have just begun my priestly ministry, I can truly tell you grace is real. I believe in grace, but in these last few weeks I can truly tell you I have SEEN grace first hand. I have seen God moving and stirring the hearts of his people to return to him. I have heard those six precious words that I have longed to hear: Father, can you hear my confession? To be able to wrestle a soul out of the vice grips of mortal sin and to restore them to the dignity of being children of God—what a grace! Grace is real! And I have seen it!

This is the theme I want to focus on today: Seeing Grace.

When you hear about seeing grace, it may seem like it is easier for priests, seminarians and nuns to see grace in their life. Seeing grace does not seem easy in the life of a family. Maybe you feel like Martha, trying to see Jesus in the home of your heart but with all the cares of family life it seems nearly impossible.

I went on a canoe trip a week ago and I was in a canoe with a dentist and he was telling me about his life. He told me about dental school and all the debt he had accumulated from going there. Then, on top of that debt, he acquired a massive mortgage for a dental practice. So he is seeing how much interest he is paying each year, engaging with clients on a day to day basis, and dealing with worker issues all on a day to day basis. Then he comes home stressed and tired to a wife who is also stressed and tired because the dishes and laundry are not done since she had been taking care of a one year old for a whole day off of three hours of sleep. Repeat this four to five times a week for five or so years, throw in a grumpy, rebellious teenager, a couple of kid sports and some in-laws and "You want me to see grace? Grace is the last thing I see!"

With this perspective in mind, we can begin to see ourselves in the story of Martha and Mary. We see Martha running around, preparing supper and understandably she is stressed and distracted by her many tasks. It is not everyday that you get to cook Jewish Mozza balls for the Son of God! We are like the Martha's of the world, trying to serve the Lord through our life in the world, through raising a family and working to provide for them and those in need but it can be difficult and hard to see grace, to see Jesus working in our lives.

However, it seems like Jesus is disapproving of the life of Martha and therefore the life of many working people. Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing.

Mary has chosen the better part. Is Jesus disapproving the active life of 90% of people? Does he desire that all of us go to live in a cloistered monastic community and become like Mary?

We feel like yea it's easier for the Mary's of the world, the priests, seminarians, and nuns to see grace in their life, but for most of us who are the Martha's of the world with debt and dishes and laundry, running around trying to get it all done. Cmon Jesus why don't you give Martha a break? It can seem to us that Jesus is being unduly harsh to Martha and to the Martha's of the world when he commends Mary and challenges Martha.

Is that what Jesus is really saying?

I think Abraham gives us a little key to helping our Martha. Our first reading reveals that Abraham was not discouraged by his hospitality. In fact, he was blessed. He received another confirmation of the promise that God had made to him. But why was he blessed? Notice how the first line of our reading says that the Lord appeared to Abraham but in the form of three men. For Jewish commentators they were confused as to why there were three men, but for Christians and the Fathers of the Church, they saw in this revelation of God the revelation of the Trinity. So why was Abraham blessed? Abraham was blessed because his hospitality led him to a deeper encounter with God. Abraham's work did not distract him from God, but brought him closer to God.

So the scriptures do not condemn working, but what Jesus is trying to get us to reflect is: does my work distract or attract? Does my work distract me FROM God or attract me to him? Does my work distract or attract?

The word distract in Greek literally means to pull away from. That is what distraction does to us. It pulls us away from what? From God. However, it does not mean that we abandon work altogether, it means that we need to change our perspective on our work. Does my work distract or attract me to God? How do we view our ordinary lives at home or at work in a way that attracts me to God?

See the saints are key for helping us understand, helping us to see grace. It's like they've got spiritual laser eye surgery and now they can see the spiritual realm more clearly. When people encounter the saints in their life, they all tend to say the same thing: it is as if I was the only person in the world.

While St. John Paul II was cardinal, he was in Poland at the time when he had heard that Pope John Paul the First had passed away. So he packed and got ready. He must have had a lot on his mind as he had some inkling that he would become the next pope and was anxious to get to the airport. However, while he was on the way, a lady came up to his car and started tapping on it hysterically. He lowered his window and she told him that she had lost her cat and that was all she had. So Cardinal Wojtyla drove around with lady to look for her cat. He drove around the block several times, found her cat and returned it to her. St. JP II would later say in his biography that he tried to see every encounter with every person as an encounter with Christ.

Mother Teresa would say something similar. She would look out over the slums of Calcutta and say: look, there is Jesus waiting to be loved. She would talk about how we need to see Jesus disguised in the Eucharist so that we can see him in distressing disguise among the poor. The saints were able to see grace. They were able to recognize Jesus in the ordinary everyday aspects of their lives such that every moment was not a moment of distraction but attraction, attracting them to God, to experience a deeper encounter with him.

So when you go to work and you have a grump boss, does that distract or attract you to God? Do you see Jesus hidden in distressing disguise in your boss?

Or when you have a newly born who just threw up on your new blouse, does it distract or attract you to God? Do you say: look, there is Jesus waiting to be loved?

You must understand now more clearly that God is calling you to serve him *in and from* the ordinary, material and secular activities of human life. He waits for us every day, in the laboratory, in the operating room, in the army barracks, in the university chair, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home and in all the immense panorama of work. Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it [...]. There is no other way. Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find him<sup>1</sup>

Today as we prepare ourselves to enter into the mystery of the Eucharist, maybe we begin to see why Jesus comes to us in the form of bread as if to beckon us: come and see me in the ordinariness of bread, recognize my true presence. Recognize me in the ordinary elements of bread so that you may recognize me in the ordinary elements of your life.

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<sup>1</sup> [\*Saint Luke's Gospel\*](#). (2005). (p. 112). Dublin; New York: Four Courts Press; Scepter Publishers.