THE CATECHISM IN EXAMPLES
Rihil Obstat.
FRANCISCUS M. WYNDHAM,
CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

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THE CATECHISM
IN EXAMPLES

By the REV. D. CHISHOLM
Priest of the Diocese of Aberdeen

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VOL. IV.
GRACE: THE SACRAMENTS

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THE CATECHISM IN EXAMPLES

XXXVII
GRACE

Grace is a supernatural gift of God, freely bestowed on us for our sanctification and salvation.
There are two kinds of grace: the one is called sanctifying grace, and the other actual grace.

I. ON SANCTIFYING GRACE.
Sanctifying grace is that grace bestowed on us by God on the day of our Baptism, which remains in the soul ever afterwards, unless destroyed by mortal sin. A soul which is in sanctifying grace is said to be "in the state of grace."
When you are in the state of grace, my child, your soul is very beautiful. It is so beautiful that nothing in this world can be compared to it.

VISION OF A SOUL IN GOD'S GRACE.
St. Catharine of Siena was often favoured by God with holy visions. One day He showed her the beauty of a soul in the state of grace. It was so beautiful that she could not look on it; the brightness of that soul dazzled her.
"O my God!" she cried out, "if I did not know that there is only one God, I should think that this was one!"

The blessed Raymond, her confessor, asked her to describe to him, as far as she was able, the beauty of the soul she had seen.

St. Catharine thought of the sweet light of the morning, and of the beautiful colours of the rainbow, but that soul was far more beautiful. She remembered the dazzling beams of the noonday sun, but the light which beamed from that soul was far brighter. She thought of the pure whiteness of the lily and of the fresh snow, but that is only an earthly whiteness. The soul which she had seen was bright with the whiteness of Heaven, such as there is not to be found on earth.

"My father," she answered, "I cannot find anything in this world that can give you the smallest idea of what I have seen. Oh! if you could but see the beauty of a soul in the state of grace, you would sacrifice your life a hundred times for its salvation! No, nothing in this world can bear any resemblance to it. I asked the angel who was with me," she continued, "what had made that soul so beautiful, and he answered me: 'It is the image and likeness of God in that soul, and the Divine Grace which made it so beautiful.'"

From her Life.

THE LITTLE INDIAN CHILD.

St. Francis Xavier was one day sent for by a poor Indian to baptize his child, who was dying. The Saint went immediately, and baptized the child. It died soon afterwards.
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When he saw that the child was dead, he raised his eyes to Heaven, and broke forth into a hymn of joy.

The people wondered when they saw this, and asked him why he wept with joy, when those around him wept with sorrow.

"You know," he said, "how many and how painful have been the journeys I have undertaken since I came to India. This day I am sufficiently rewarded for them all, because I have been able to clothe this soul with grace, and to send one child more into Heaven to glorify God."

LOHNER.

Great, indeed, my child, is the beauty of your soul when it is in the state of grace. Oh, keep away from mortal sin, that its beauty may never be destroyed.

II. MORTAL SIN DESTROYS SANCTIFYING GRACE.

O my child, ever keep in mind that even one mortal sin, wilfully committed, separates the soul from God. The soul in which mortal sin dwells may appear in the eyes of others to be alive as before, but in the eyes of God it is dead, because, by the loss of sanctifying grace, it is separated from Him Who is its life. O my child, may God preserve you from so terrible a calamity!

THE CHRISTMAS-TREE.

There grew in the forest a beautiful young fir-tree. The ground in which it was planted was covered with snow, for it was Christmastide, but
the pure white snow only served to make the green foliage of the fir-tree look still more beautiful.

The villagers, who were looking forward to a season of festivity, as the great festival of Christ’s Nativity drew near, sent the forester into the wood to bring them a Christmas-tree to adorn the place where they were to assemble.

As he was looking around for a suitable one, his eyes fell on the fir-tree of which we have spoken.

"This is the most beautiful of all the trees I can see. I will cut it down and carry it to the village."

So he took up his axe, and with it struck the trunk of the beautiful tree, and the root and the stem were very soon separated. He then carried it to the village, and the people were all in rapture when they saw it.

In the midst of his little children, who, like those around them, were full of joy and gladness as they stood gazing on the beautiful tree, stood a man, the father of a family, silent and thoughtful. He did not join with the others in their boisterous mirth, and a tear even seemed to fall from his eye as he looked down affectionately on his little ones playing merrily at his side.

"O father," they rapturously exclaimed, "what a beautiful tree! The branches are so green, and the stem so noble! But why do you not rejoice with us, papa, and why are you looking so sad?"

"My dear children," he answered, "this tree, so beautiful and so noble, puts me in mind of the beauty of your souls at this moment, and brings before me the thought of what may one day happen to each of you. While this tree was standing in the forest,
GRACE

it was fixed to the ground by its roots, and it drew up from the earth the sap which alone could make it the beautiful tree that you admire so much. If the forester had only left it alone, it would have grown up every day higher and still more noble, until it had reached its full growth and attained perfection.

"But, alas! even in its early years it has been ruthlessly separated from its parent stem by his axe, and its beauty must in a short time decay, and these branches, which at this moment fill the children and the people with joy, will in a few days be fit only for the fire.

"Your souls at this moment, my children, are fresh and beautiful, because they are united to God by grace; and if you continue to live in the grace of God, you will become daily more and more beautiful, until you attain that perfection for which God created you—union with Himself in Heaven. But if by a mortal sin you separate yourselves from God, your souls become dead; and so long as you remain in that state, you are fit only to be cut down and to be cast into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the Devil and his angels. You may, indeed, it is true, for a little time appear outwardly to be beautiful as before, but in the eyes of God you are already dead, because you are separated from Him Who is the very life of your souls."

The children attentively listened to their father's words, and never forgot the beautiful comparison he had placed before them. Would to God that every Christian child would also always bear this example in their minds.
III. Actual Grace: its Necessity.

Actual grace is the grace God gives to us to enable us to avoid evil, and to do good.

You cannot do any good for Heaven without the grace of God. You are like a little child that cannot walk. If his mother does not keep him up, he cannot take one step, but will stagger and fall; so, unless you are strengthened by the actual grace of God, you cannot persevere in the state of grace.

ERON, THE SOLITARY.

In the day of St. Palladius the anchorite, there was a monk called Eron, who dwelt in a cell not far from the place where that great Saint lived.

He was born of a noble family, and was also blessed with great natural talents. But God inspired him even from his youth with the desire of leading a more perfect life. Eron at once obeyed the call of God, and left all things to follow Him.

There were at that time in the desert many holy men, who had gone there to serve God in silence and prayer, but there was not one of them so fervent as Eron.

He spent the day in continual prayer and in works of penance, and the only food he ate consisted of wild herbs. The brethren spoke of him as of one who was already a Saint, and strove to imitate the example he gave them.

But as time went on he allowed vain thoughts to enter his mind. He had, indeed, done much for God, but he now seemed to forget that it was by God’s grace he had been able to do it. He was
pleased when he heard others speak of his mortified life, and thought that he already deserved to be called a Saint because he had been so holy.

From one fault he fell into another, till in the end he left the desert altogether, and went back to the world, which he had long ago forsaken at the call of God. There he met with evil companions, and because he trusted to himself, and neglected to ask God for His help, he fell into great sins.

For a long time he lived in this wretched state, till at last God had compassion on him, and let him see how far he had fallen, because he had trusted so much to himself.

He was struck down by an illness which lasted for six months. He thought he was going to die, and his soul was filled with great fear when he remembered the bad life he had led, and the judgment he would soon have to undergo.

"O my God, make me better again!" he prayed. "I will return to the desert, and live as I did before, and do penance for my sins."

God heard his prayer, and Eron kept his promise. He returned to the desert, and humbly asked pardon for the scandal he had given. He did not live long after his return, but in a short time died a holy and a happy death, surrounded by his brethren.

*Life of St. Macarius.*

From this example you can learn a great lesson. If Eron fell into sin because he trusted to himself, and not to God's grace, you have much more reason to be afraid, since you are so far from being as perfect as he was.
ST. CATHERINE OF GENOA BEWAITS HER FRAILTY.

St. Catherine, as well as all the other great Saints of God, saw clearly how weak and frail human nature is in itself, and that it cannot do any good without the help of God’s grace.

“O my God,” she was frequently heard to say, “how very weak I am! If left to myself, I cannot do any good in such a manner as to please Thee. Left to myself, I can only do what is wrong. Alas! what would become of me if Thou didst leave me without Thy grace?”

When she fell into any venial fault—for even the just man “falls seven times a day”—she would raise up her eyes to Heaven and exclaim, “This is another of the fruits that my garden produces,” meaning that faults and sins are the natural productions of human nature if not supported by the grace of God.

THE VOICE OF GOD.

In the year 1650 a soldier, who was leading a careless life, was walking in the street at midday near the Church of St. Peter’s Fort, in the Island of Martinique. Suddenly he heard a voice which called him twice distinctly by name. He instantly turned towards the place from which the sound seemed to proceed, but, to his surprise, saw no one. Thinking that he was mistaken, he resumed his walk.

He had not gone many steps when he heard the same voice calling him as before. This time it seemed to proceed from the interior of the church,
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so he entered. But here again he saw no one, although he looked in every part of the church. So he turned to go out, wondering, at the same time, how he could hear his name uttered twice so distinctly without seeing the person who uttered it.

As he was on the threshold of the church, he heard again, still more distinctly, the same voice calling on him by name. This time he seemed to hear it not only with his ears, but even in his very soul. In his wonder and alarm at this mysterious voice he went to a priest whom he saw advancing towards the church, and asked him what it could mean.

The priest, when he had thought for a few moments on what the man had told him, answered: "Doubtless, my child, it is the voice of God Himself, who desires you to become a good Christian. Go at once to Confession, and begin to serve God from this time faithfully, that you may inherit the blessings He has prepared for you."

The soldier obeyed, and became a fervent Christian.

Jesus is calling on you even more distinctly than He did on that soldier. His priests, who speak to you in His Name, are every day asking you to avoid sin and to return to God. And have you not often heard the sweet voice of Jesus Himself within you telling you to be good and love Him? Now at this moment He is calling on you in an especial manner to come and be His faithful child, and to love Him in this world as well as in eternity. Oh, then, like the soldier, obey his voice, and begin now to be His child in deed and in truth.
HENRY IV. OF FRANCE AND HIS TUTOR.

Henry IV. of France, in one of his conversations with his tutor, told him that his one great desire was, not only to equal, but even to surpass, the most celebrated men of whom he had read.

His tutor, a man of great piety and wisdom, said to him in reply: "What assurance can you give me that you will be able to fulfil this excellent resolution?"

"What a strange question to ask me! Do you think that I am not sincere in what I have said?"

"I am fully persuaded that you have spoken from the depths of a most sincere and generous heart. But I feel that you have undertaken a project which will be most difficult to realize, and I desired to know on what grounds you built your hopes of success."

"My hope of succeeding," he replied, "is founded on the great desire I have to succeed. Do you not think that success must follow every noble exertion we make to possess that which is the object of our ambition, when undertaken with a firm resolution and determination?"

"My dear child," said his preceptor, "your reasoning is that of a pagan, not of a Christian. You must know that, of himself, man is incapable of accomplishing any good action, or even of desiring to do so, unless God inspires him with that desire, and gives him the necessary help to fulfil it. It is without doubt that it was God who inspired you with this noble thought of imitating, and even of
excelling, the great men of all times, and it is He alone who can grant you the strength necessary to realize it."

_Vie de Henri IV._

**ST. PHILIP NERI'S WORDS TO JESUS.**

St. Philip Neri was not only a good Christian, but a great Saint. Every day of his life he tried to please God, and every day, too, by his good works, he was heaping up for himself great treasures for Heaven.

Yet there was one thought that was always uppermost in his mind day and night. He thought that he might still be lost, because he might not persevere to the end. Every morning he used to say to Jesus: "O my Jesus, take care of me this day, and do not leave me to myself; for if Thou dost not watch over me, I may, like another Judas, betray Thee by falling into sin."

Again, he would frequently say: "O my Jesus, the wound in Thy Sacred Side was indeed very large; yet, if Thou leavest me to myself, I may make it still larger. If Thou dost not hold me up by Thy grace, I shall most certainly fall into sin."

St. Philip persevered unto the end, because he was always watching and praying. So it is only by constant watching and prayer, my child, that you will overcome temptation and obtain perseverance.

**IV. THE REWARD OF PERSEVERING IN GOD'S GRACE.**

My child, the path to Paradise is sometimes long and weary, but the reward that is to be given to those who persevere to the end is worth all the trouble
that we can take in this life to obtain it. Be faithful, therefore, to the end in the good resolutions you have taken; for God is always ready to assist by His grace those who earnestly desire to keep them.

ST. CAMILLUS'S CONVERSION.

The father of St. Camillus did not take care of him when he was young, hence he grew up without piety. He was even given to many sins in his youth, and was walking on the broad way which leads to Hell, when he was converted by a special grace of God.

One day he was so far reduced to poverty that, to obtain a livelihood, he hired himself to some masons who were building a house, to carry the stones and mortar for them.

While occupied at this work, he one day—it was the festival of Our Lady's Purification—heard in his heart the voice of God's grace.

At that moment God brought before his mind his whole past life, and showed him the terrible state of his soul.

He threw himself on his knees in the middle of the road on which he stood, and, yielding to the grace which God gave him, began to weep bitterly.

"Ah, how miserable I am!" he said. "Why have I not long ago begun to know and serve my Lord and my God? Why have I so long resisted His grace when He called me to change my life? Oh, what a life I have led! It would have been better that I had never been born! Pardon me, O Lord! pardon a most miserable sinner, and give me time to do true penance!"
Saying these words, he struck his breast, and made a solemn promise to live for God alone all the rest of his life; which promise he kept most faithfully. He is now a Saint in Heaven.

V. WITH THE GRACE OF GOD WE CAN DO ALL THINGS.

If it is true that you can do nothing for Heaven without grace, it is also true that with it you can do all things. Oh, how precious, then, is the grace of God!

BLESSED LANFRANC OF CANTERBURY.

Blessed Lanfranc was one of the most learned men of the eleventh century. His father was rich, and was thus able to give him an excellent education. But in his youth the world and human learning took up all his attention, and he grew up in an entire ignorance of his religious duties.

Having a great desire to make his name known over all Europe, he passed over into France. One day towards evening, as he was passing through a forest not far from the city of Rouen, he was met by a band of robbers, who took from him all he possessed, and, having tied his hands and his feet, and having covered his eyes with a handkerchief, left him by the wayside.

Night came on, but no one came to his assistance. He began, then, to think of God. He had often read of how God extends His protection to those who pray to Him. But as he had never been accustomed to pray, he did not know how to begin.
"O my God, I do not know how to pray to Thee," he said. "I have given so much time to human science that I have entirely neglected the care of my soul. But, O my God, take me out of this danger, and I promise for the time to come to live in a way that will please Thee."

Next morning some people who were passing heard his cries for help, and going to the place where he lay, released him.

"Can you tell me the way that leads to the poorest monastery in this part of the country?" he said.

They answered: "There is none we know of so poor as the one which is being built at a little distance from this by a very holy man of God called Hellouin."

When they had pointed out the way to him, they departed, and Lanfranc immediately went to the place of which they had told him. As he drew near to it, he saw the saintly Abbot Hellouin with his own hands helping the masons in their work.

"I am come to stay with you," he said, "for I want to serve God and save my soul."

The Abbot asked him who he was, and what had been the cause of this heroic resolution; and, having heard his history, he sent for one of the monks and told him to give the stranger the book containing the rules of their Order, that he might know what would be required of him if he took up his abode amongst them.

Lanfranc took the book, and when he had read it, he returned it to the Abbot, who said to him:

"You see the strict life we lead in this house, and you know the penances we perform, and our con-
tinual prayer, and the silence we impose upon ourselves. Do you think you can accomplish all these things?"

Lanfranc answered: "Of myself I confess I cannot do so, but with God’s help I hope to be able to observe everything laid down in the rule, no matter how difficult it may now appear to me."

The Abbot was pleased with this answer, and consented to receive him. He spent many years there, and during all that time he persevered as he began, and faithfully accomplished every point of the rule. Some parts of it were at first difficult to him who had been so long accustomed to all the pleasures of life; but as he placed his entire confidence in God, he received from Him all the grace he stood in need of to perform them.

After some years God was pleased to exalt his humble servant and make him Archbishop of Canterbury. By his piety and learning he became one of the greatest lights that ever shone in the Church of our native country.


**THE HEROIC CHILD OF JAPAN.**

During one of the persecutions which the Emperors of Japan raised against the Christians, a husband and wife were sitting together in their humble home, speaking of the terrible death they would have to endure if they were found out to be Christians, and of the joys God would give them in Heaven as the reward.

"Ah," said the wife, "willingly would I lay down my life for the love of God, and ardently do I long
for the hour when I may enter into His presence in Heaven. But what would become of our little boy? They would take him away, and bring him up a pagan like themselves."

This thought cast a shadow of gloom over their otherwise calm souls.

In the meantime, the boy, a beautiful child of six years, was playing with his toys in a corner of the house. He had overheard the words of his mother, and without saying what he was going to do, he went towards the fire, and put into it a piece of iron which was lying near. When it had become red-hot, the child took it into his hands, and, holding it by the part that was glowing, turned towards his mother without uttering even a sigh.

When the mother saw the hot iron burning her child's hand, she screamed, and, running towards him, took it out of his hand, saying: "What made you do such a dreadful thing?"

"My mother," answered the boy, "I wanted to show you that I also can suffer for the love of God. Oh! I will suffer whatever torment they inflict upon me as easily as I endured this one, that I may go to Heaven with you."

It was indeed the grace of God that had given that child such strength and courage.

*Hist. of the Persecut. in Japan.*

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**THE LITTLE CHINESE GIRL.**

"In one of our missions," writes one of the apostles of China, "I met a little girl, only ten years old. She was well instructed in her religion, which is a rare thing among the Chinese of her age."
"Please, Father," she said to me, 'give me the Sacrament of Confirmation.'
"I thought the child was too young, and I told her to wait till some other time.
"'O Father,' she said, with an earnestness that moved me, 'might I not be confirmed now?'
"'Well, my child, if after your confirmation the mandarin should put you into prison, and ask you about your faith, what would you answer him?'
"'I would say to him, By the grace of God I am a Christian!'
"'And if he should ask you to renounce your faith, what would you do?'
"'I would answer, Never."
"'But then if he should send for the executioners, and tell you that if you did not at once renounce your faith he would order them to cut off your head?'
"'Then I would say to him, Cut it off.'
"I saw from these words of the child that it was the Holy Ghost Himself Who had inspired them, and I no longer hesitated, but gave her the Holy Sacrament which she so earnestly asked."

*Annals of Prop. of Faith, No. 95, p. 304.*

**THE VISION OF THEODOSIUS.**

God has promised to give us "'the crown of life" in Heaven if we serve Him faithfully while we are on earth.

The Abbot Theodosius tells us the following story of what happened to himself when he was a young man.

"One day, when I was at my prayers. I thought I
saw by my side a person who was surrounded with a bright light, brighter even than that of the sun. He took me by the hand, and said to me: 'Theodosius, come along with me, for you have to fight to gain a crown.'

"Then it seemed to me that he led me into a large hall full of people, who had come to see the fight; some of them were clad in white, like the one who had brought me, and others wore dark garments, and were dreadful to look at.

"When I was placed in the middle of the hall, I saw standing there a negro of great size and strength. The man who had brought me to this place said to me: 'This is the one with whom you have to fight.'

"I was filled with great fear at these words, and I answered: 'O sir, it will be impossible for me to overcome this monster, for he is so much stronger than I am; no man on earth could conquer him!'

"But he replied: 'You must fight with him: I brought you hither for that very purpose. Go, then, attack him courageously; I will stand beside you and help you; be not afraid.'

"When I heard these words I advanced towards my enemy. He was indeed very strong, and certainly would easily have gained the victory over me, but my guide came to my assistance, and the negro was soon overcome.

"As soon as he fell, the people in the hall who were in black began to cry out in dismay, and fled in haste; but those who were clad in white sang a beautiful hymn of joy in honour of him who had helped me in the fight. Then they came forward to the place where I stood, and congratulated me on my success. 'Come
with us,' they said to me, 'and dwell for ever in our beautiful home, where you shall be filled with happiness which will never end.'

"As soon as I entered their dwelling, which was beautiful above all I had ever seen or had been able to imagine, he who had led me to fight, and who had helped me to gain the victory, put upon my head a beautiful crown, and said to me that this was the reward he had promised, and that it was now mine for ever, because I had overcome my adversary.

"When I returned to my senses, I began to think what was the meaning of the vision. God seemed to answer me in my heart, saying: 'The negro is Satan, who tries to destroy the souls of men; the hall in which you had to fight represents the world; the people whom you saw in the hall were the good and evil spirits, who are witnesses of your conflict; he who assisted you to gain the victory is Myself; and the crown given to you is the glory of Heaven, which I will give to everyone who is victorious over Satan and sin.'"

We also are engaged in this war. If we want to gain the crown of victory in Heaven, we must fight bravely during our short life in this world. God's grace will help us to gain it.


THE NOBLE WIFE AND MOTHER.

During the great persecutions in the early ages of the Church there lived in the city of Culusitana a woman named Victoria, who, with her husband and children, were Christians. Being brought before the
tribunal of the governor, and ordered to renounce their faith, the husband miserably yielded, but Victoria remained steadfast in her resolution to die for Christ rather than deny her religion. The judge condemned her to be burned to death.

When she was tied to the stake, and when already the flames were beginning to rise up around her, her husband, who was present with his children, being filled with agony on seeing her whom he loved about to leave him for ever, and trying to preserve her life by making her consent to the judge's orders, as he himself had done, cried out to her: "O my wife, what awful sufferings you are going to endure! What a frightful death! Oh, if you will not live for my sake, look at least upon the children you have borne, and have pity on them. Oh, why are you so hard-hearted as thus to abandon your husband, who has ever loved you, and your children, who you always said were dear to you? Look, I beg of you—look on me again; look at these little ones of ours, and for our sakes obey the commands of the judge; then he will make us all both happy and rich."

With these and similar words did that wretched man try to move the constancy of that admirable woman. But God's grace was stronger within her than a wife or a mother's love, and she cried out with a loud voice: "Jesus Christ has said: 'He that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth husband or wife more than Me is not worthy of Me.'" I indeed love you with the love of an affectionate wife and mother, but I love God more. To Him I leave you; into the hands of His mercy I commend my soul, that I
GRACE

may receive from Him the hundredfold reward He has promised to those who leave husband and children for His sake.”

These were the last words she uttered, as the fire consumed all that was mortal in her; then her pure soul rose up to God, her Heavenly Father, for Whose sake and the sake of the faith He had bestowed upon her she had made the sacrifice of her life.

VI. ON CORRESPONDING WITH GOD’S GRACE.

God has His own ways of giving us His grace. Oh, happy are those who never refuse to hear His voice, and accept His grace when He offers it to them.

ST. PAUL THE SIMPLE’S VISION.

St. Paul, called the Simple, on account of his child-like simplicity, was a disciple of the great St. Antony. God gave him the special gift of being able to see what was taking place in the hearts of men as clearly as if he saw it with his bodily eyes.

One day he was sitting at the door of the church looking at the people who were going in. Suddenly he began to weep and to strike his breast, as those do who are in great sorrow.

The people asked him what was the matter with him, but he would not give them any answer.

They told him to go into the church, but he did not go. He still remained in the same place, weeping and sighing, and striking his breast.

When Holy Mass was over, and the people began to come out again, St. Paul looked at each of them
as they passed near him. All at once he began to smile, and to give way to outward marks of very great joy. His tears of sorrow gave place to those of gladness, and he began to skip about like a little child.

Those who were acquainted with him were not surprised at this, because they knew his great simplicity, and only smiled as they saw him acting in this way.

Going forward to a certain man, a stranger, who was making his way through the crowd, he took him aside and said to him:

"Tell me what happened to you while you were in the church. For when you went in your soul was black and frightful to behold, and now it is beautiful and bright, and the Holy Spirit of God is in it: tell me how this change took place."

The stranger was filled with surprise when he saw that the secrets of his heart had thus been made known. He answered without hesitating: "I am a great sinner. When I went into the church I had no sorrow for my sins; I went in because I had nothing else to do, and because I saw so many others going in.

"When I entered I heard the preacher say these words of Isaias: 'Wash, and be made clean; and if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow.' When I heard these words, there was something in my heart that said to me: 'These words are for you.' So I asked God to pardon me. I went to Confession immediately, confessed my many crimes, and obtained absolution. From the moment that the priest pronounced over me the words of God's pardon, I felt so full of joy: I feel as if I can
now call Heaven my country and God my Father." Saying this, he went away.

St. Paul also went home filled with a holy joy, and admiring the wonderful ways of God in bringing home to the fold His wandering children.

THE STORY OF A CONVERSION.

This is a little story of how one who was brought up in the Protestant religion was converted to the Faith. It is he himself who tells us about it.

"My father was a civil officer in Dresden in moderate circumstances. Unfortunately, I lost both my parents at an early age. I inherited from them a small estate, which my brother, who was many years my senior, and who had married a rich wife, managed for me, as my guardian. He put me as an apprentice under a lithographer, secured for me a room in an attic, and whenever I needed money he gave me what I wanted; further than this, he did not trouble himself about me.

"In this abandonment, I often passed many sad hours. Whenever my heart was heavier than usual, I went to the Catholic church, and knelt on the altar steps; for, although I had never spoken to anyone on the subject, I felt that God was present there in quite a different manner from what He was in the Protestant churches which I regularly attended for sermon on Sundays, but there was nothing to retain me when the sermon was over and the music had ceased.

"One day my guardian declared to me, as he handed me some money, that my capital was used up, his guardianship was at an end, and that for
the future I should have to provide for myself. I was thunderstruck at these words, but kept back my tears, and went away dejected and silent to my attic-room. Henceforth I lived on bread and water, but still my money rapidly dwindled away, and one morning I awoke to find that I had barely the price of a little loaf remaining. It was impossible for me to ask anything from my brother, who had shown himself so heartless to me. In my sorrow I went to the Catholic church, where I found nobody. I knelt down near the altar, and poured out my sorrows before the merciful Lord, Who I felt was there.

"On a sudden there arose a great calm within me. I went to the workshop as usual, and resumed my work. Hardly had I begun when the master sent for me, and told me that he was so well satisfied with my work that for the future he would pay me weekly wages. Strange to say, the idea of becoming a Catholic had never yet entered my mind, although I continued to practise the devotion of which I have told you.

"By the time that I had reached the age of eighteen I had laid up enough money to enable me to attend the Academy of Munich. I was, one cold November evening, seated at a window, when I heard the ringing of a little bell, and saw the Blessed Sacrament carried to a sick person, accompanied by two servers bearing lanterns. On other occasions I had always observed a number of persons following the priest in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; but now I saw no one: the cold rain mixed with snow seemed to have kept everyone within doors."
"Then the thought came into my mind that, since there was no Catholic person accompanying the priest, I myself must go and show honour to my Lord. I left my place at the window, and followed the priest bareheaded to the narrow street, where, as usual, before entering the house of the sick, he turned to give the benediction. Surprised, probably, at finding me alone before him, he stood for a little time holding up the Blessed Sacrament with his hands.

"I suddenly felt in the depths of my soul that I stood there in the presence of my God; I fell on my knees, and when I rose again, and was alone, my determination had been taken to become a Catholic. Next day I sought out a priest to instruct me, and soon, thanks be to God, was received into the Church, of which I have tried to be a worthy member."

_Ave Maria_, vol. xviii., p. 93.

**GOD'S VOICE IN THE TEMPEST.**

In a great castle in the territory of Rhenish Prussia a child was born, who at his baptism received the name of Norbert.

This child from his birth had all the advantages the world could give him. He was the heir of great wealth, and the descendant of a noble family. As he grew up, Nature added every grace of body and mind, which made him the centre of attraction of all the people—not only of those near his home, but of those also who lived afar off.

The flattery of the world for a time deceived him. In the midst of his enjoyments and pleasures, he forgot God, and placed all his affections on the glory
which the world poured upon him. One season of festivity followed another without ceasing, carrying him always still further onward on the way to ruin.

Yet he felt within his heart a great want; he could not tell what it was, but he was not perfectly happy. His conscience also told him that the pleasures he sought after so eagerly were vain and empty. But he shut his ears to that voice of God, and continued to follow the path of evil he had chosen.

One day, in the year 1314, he was riding towards a village called Vreden. His thoughts were fixed on the pleasures and amusements he was about to enjoy. To reach Vreden he had to pass through a desert place eighteen miles in length. He had only one servant with him.

When they had ridden about half that distance, they were suddenly overtaken by a terrible thunder-storm.

The servant, full of terror, cried out: “Come back! come back! for the hand of God is against thee.”

Hardly had he said these words when a loud clap of thunder was heard, and a ball of fire fell at his horse’s feet, burning the grass and tearing up the earth around them. The horse, thus frightened, threw its rider, who lay on the plain for nearly an hour like one dead.

Then, coming to himself, he cried out to God like another St. Paul: “Lord, what dost Thou wish me to do?”

At these words, he heard as it were a voice in his soul distinctly saying to him: “Turn away from evil and do good; seek after peace and pursue it.”
GRACE

As soon as he was able to rise from the ground, he took the resolution of at once forsaking the world and all its vanities, and living for God alone and the salvation of his soul. He returned to his native city, and entered a monastery, where he spent many years in silence and prayer, weeping for his past sins and asking God for mercy.

Thus in an instant did the grace of God change the heart of St. Norbert. He became a Saint and the founder of a great religious order in the Church which, by its zeal for the conversion of sinners, has gained many souls to God. 

Life of St. Norbert.

TOUCHED BY GRACE.

St. Louis Bertrand was one day walking with some of his companions on a country road in the neighbourhood of his monastery. Their conversation was on pious subjects; for, having their minds and hearts in Heaven, their words also were about the things of Heaven.

It happened that a young man was walking a little distance behind them. Under his cloak he carried a sword, and his whole appearance spoke of a man under the influence of some great passion.

The religious, without taking any heed of the young man’s presence, continued to speak aloud as before. The man was sufficiently near them to hear all they said.

The Holy Ghost, Who wished to give a special grace to him, made use of their words to touch his heart. In a short time the young man went up to them, and, throwing away the weapon he had con-
sealed under his clothing, cast himself on his knees before St. Louis.

"Ah, my Father," he cried out, "may God reward you in Heaven for what you have done for me to-day!"

The good Father looked at the man kneeling before him, and asked him what had happened to him.

"I was on my way to take revenge on an enemy who had injured me. But the words I have just now heard from your lips have so changed my heart that I am now on my knees to ask the pardon of God."

"Do you forgive him who has injured you, my child?"

"Yes, Father, from my inmost soul."

"Then God will also forgive you."

St. Louis then returned thanks to God, Who had been pleased to show His mercy to a sinner who had so grievously offended Him.

"See, my brothers," he said to those who accompanied him—"see how the Holy Ghost makes use of the simplest means to do His greatest works and bestow His choicest graces on His children."

The poor sinner became reconciled to God, and to the end of his days persevered in the new life of grace so wonderfully given him.

*Life of St. Louis Bertrand.*

"I CAN BE GOD'S CHILD AT ONCE."

In the days of the Emperor Theodosius two young gentlemen who belonged to his Court went for a short time into the country for their amusement.

As they passed by a certain monastery, curiosity