

The “Good Work” of Grace (2nd Sunday of Advent, Year C)

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11—Blameless for the Day of Christ

⁴ [A]lways in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ *And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ...* ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ *so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,* ¹¹ *filled with the fruits of righteousness* which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil 1:4-6, 8-11)

1. “Work” of Grace: “he who began a *good work* (Greek *ergon agathon*) in you” (1:6)
2. Day of Jesus Christ = “day” of *Parousia* and final judgment (1:6)
(Cf. 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5, etc.)
2. Purity: may be “pure” or “sincere” (Greek *eilikrinēs*) (3:10)
3. Blameless: and “blameless” or “undamaged” (Greek *aproskopos*) (3:10)
4. Righteousness: filled with the “fruits of righteousness (Greek *dikaiosynē*)” (3:11)

The Living Tradition

Catechism: *The charity of Christ is the source in us of all our merits* before God. Grace, by uniting us to Christ in active love, ensures the supernatural quality of our acts and consequently their merit before God and before men. The saints have always had a lively awareness that their merits were pure grace. (CCC 2011)

Thérèse of Lisieux: After earth’s exile, I hope to go and enjoy you in the fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for your *love alone*.... In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is blemished in your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in your own *justice* and to receive from your *love* the eternal possession of *yourself*. (St. Thérèse of Lisieux, “Act of Offering,” in *Story of a Soul* [trans. John Clarke; Washington, D.C.: ICS, 1981], 277.)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (2nd Sunday of Advent, Year C)

1. According to St. Paul, who is the source of all our “good works”? What role does grace play in preparing us for the final Advent of Christ?

For Further Reading

1. Dennis Hamm, SJ. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2013.