

Reflection of Our Lady's Message 25th November 2011

“Dear children! Today I desire to give you hope and joy. Everything that is around you, little children, leads you towards worldly things but I desire to lead you towards a time of grace, so that through this time you may be closer to my Son, that He can lead you towards His love and eternal life, for which every heart yearns. You, little children, pray, and may this time for you, be one of grace for your soul. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

This month's message begins with Mary's desire to give us **hope** and **joy**. In life we either desire that which is of great worth or that which is worthless.

We have many hopes in our hearts but the greatest of all hopes is the **hope of redemption, the hope of eternal life**. Mary leads us to her Son, so that He in turn may lead us to desire His love and eternal life. In Jesus our hope is not deceptive but real for our God is faithful to His word and promises.

Joy, a fruit of the Spirit, a fruit of love, in the Old Testament the joy of the Lord was seen as the strength of God's people and in the New Testament, joy at the birth of Jesus our Lord and Saviour, was a joy to be shared by the whole people.

I DESIRE TO LEAD YOU TOWARDS A TIME OF GRACE

Mary desires to lead us towards a time of grace. This very season of Advent is seen as a time of grace for the church, and for the world, when we are reminded of the Christ child, who came once in the flesh at Bethlehem, comes now to every true believer who opens his or her heart to allow Jesus to be born again in their hearts and souls today.

The same Christ who came once in the flesh and comes today will also come again in glory at the end of time, not wrapped in swaddling clothes but in splendour and glory for all to see.

WHAT IS THIS TIME OF GRACE MARY SPEAKS OF?

Firstly grace is a **personal thing** and a relationship between God and mankind. Paul wrote to the early Christians to remind them that God's grace has been revealed. The grace he writes about is the very person of our Lord Jesus Christ, the mystery of Christ that was hidden for many years is now revealed.

John writes we must not love this **passing world**. Worldly things do not last forever but we know and believe in **God's love for us that is everlasting**. This is what we call **uncreated grace**, God's everlasting love for us and his constant affection towards us.

Then we can speak of His **created grace** which is being held, supported and sustained by God's love when all else seems to fail in difficult and testing times in our lives.

But that which really changes our hearts and lives is what we call **sanctifying grace**.

It is our response to God in love and obedience. The more we respond in loving obedience to the call of God in our lives the more we will yearn for God and for the good things that our Father in heaven promises through His Son, Jesus.

PRAY AND MAY THIS TIME FOR YOU BE ONE OF GRACE FOR YOUR SOUL

It is both a gift and a grace to be able to pray always and not lose heart. Finding time for prayer means finding time for God, it means finding time **‘for a time of grace’** that God alone can bestow upon us.

If we are having difficulty in finding time for prayer, time for God, in our daily lives how then can we experience the fruit of deep prayer from the heart which brings about conversion and peace in ones life?

In the New Translation of the Mass we now say before receiving Holy Communion, Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof but only say but the word and my soul shall be healed.

Today in the Middle East and other parts of our world we can see that the **‘Soul’** of many nations have need for both healing and saving.

The three powers of the soul are **‘Memory,’ ‘Intellect,’ and the ‘Will.’**

So much grace is needed to heal the memories, the scars and wounds that war and hatred leave behind in the souls of people.

So much grace is needed if people are to be enlightened and educated to want peace. To understand, they must stand under the light of what has been revealed in Jesus if true peace is to grow and flourish in our world today.

And, so much grace is needed for nations to put God’s will first in place of their own if they are to walk once again in the light of the Lord and His saving presence.

Let no one this coming Christmas be a stranger or ignorant of the message proclaimed first by the angels from on high, **“Peace on earth to those who enjoy God’s favour.”**

God’s favour, God’s grace is a condition for true peace in our lives.

We who have been so blessed to receive this hope and joy cannot and should not keep it to ourselves. The hope and joy Mary speaks of is for us first to receive it and then share that hope and joy with others as a time of grace.

Why not invite a member of your family or someone you know who may have wandered away from the life and prayer of the church to come with you once again and receive the grace of God which has appeared and made salvation possible for the whole human race?

I wish you all a very blessed and grace filled Christmas.

Fr Ciaran McDonnell