

# finding grace

Sometimes the simplest words are the hardest to define. This seems to be the case with the word "grace." As can be seen in the following pages, God's grace takes on many different forms. The premise of this special section was simple, talk to people throughout the archdiocese—parishioners, bishops, priests, religious, deacons, lay ministers—and ask where in their lives they find God's grace. But the answers varied widely. Some gave simple, concise answers. Others provided more theological answers. Others had trouble sticking to the prescribed word limit. Some looked to church services to find grace, others to community, others to nature and still others to the service of others. The responses to the question show the diversity of believers in the archdiocese. This section also includes reflections from businesses, organizations, schools, publishers, religious communities and others about how they share God's grace. Hopefully, this special section devoted to grace provides an opportunity for reflection about where God's grace can be found in your life. It seems from the various thoughts on grace in these pages that grace is all around us, but, as a few respondents pointed out, it is up to us to find that grace.

**Maryknoll Father Bill Donnelly**  
I've worked 30 years in Guatemala. One of the great pleasures was serving the people there in the mission, the Mayan Indians and the Ladinos. Most of the time I worked there it was a country at war—civil war. Being with the people in those hard times, I thank God for that. While I was there they killed 17 priests and a bishop and hundreds of catechists, sisters and brothers. Those people giving their lives was a great inspiration.



**Deacon Abrom Salley**, house director of Zaccheus House, a residence for homeless men  
I see Christ in the people we serve everyday. I see the transformation in the men. The same men who have always been receiving, panhandling, stealing, through Zaccheus House they are able to find God's grace. To empower these men, to me, that is seeing God's grace.

## service and social justice

**Deacon Christopher Virruso**, went to New Orleans with a group of Chicago Deacons through Project Hope  
I think God's graces are thrown into the air everyday to all of us. It is up to us to recognize them. I saw God's grace in the appreciation of the people we helped—the Carmelite sisters and the girls whose school was rehabbed. We saw how grateful they were to have help come to them from an unexpected source.

**Glenmary Father John Rausch**, Director of the Catholic Committee of Appalachia and columnist  
We have a terrible time here with mountaintop removal (a kind of mining). It destroys not only the mountains, but also the communities. I was up on one of these mountains with a group of people—about 60—and it was just a lunar landscape. At the end of the prayer service, I gave each of them a handful of wildflower seeds, and they walked around this large area, planting one or two here and there. I went back up on that mountain a year and a half later, and they had just hydroseeded it, so there was like a peach fuzz of grass, but all over the place, clumps of shasta daisies. ... There can be a renewal of life in the midst of death, and we can replace ugliness with beauty. Those are the moments of inspiration and grace I find.

**Joanne Walczynski**, Coordinator of Youth Ministry/Vicariate I  
I look inside of my own heart to be reminded of the peace and love that is offered to me everyday from many different God sources. In the midst of hectic schedules and hurried lifestyles, it is sometimes difficult to trust that I don't have to and really should not approach life and tasks as if I was in charge. It seems especially freeing to be resful with the Lord's movement in my life. The peace that this acceptance of God's special grace is for me always a prayer and a blessing. Helping our youth/teens in an outreach youth ministry believe that God has created each one of them with particular and unique qualities as well as opportunities to develop those qualities is a challenge. Adults are called to be models (for our youth) of trust, peace and acceptance as they walk with and affirm teens as they grow and develop their faith.

**Ryan Shirilla**, member of Jesuit Volunteer Corp Magis, graduate student at Loyola University and teacher at Chicago Jesuit Academy  
In small ways I see God's grace. Just showing up here [at Holy Name Cathedral], something inspired me to come here during the day for Mass.

**Passionist Father Robin Ryan**, associate professor, Catholic Theological Union; director, Catholics on Call  
As a theologian, I think of grace as first and foremost God's loving self-communication to us. God's offer of self is always there for us, even when we are not thinking about God at all. There are times in our lives when God's self-communication is mediated to us with particular intensity: in the sacraments, when God's self-gift in Christ becomes real to us at key moments in our lives; in our encounter with the poor, who mediate the face of the crucified Christ to us; in the marvelous experience of deep friendship, in which love through thick and thin mirrors the fidelity of God; in the experience of forgiveness—given or received, when we catch a glimpse of the God who is "rich in mercy."

## young adults

**Erika Corona**, Junior at Dominican University, River Forest  
I find God's grace in the gift of service that I believe God has given me, and as the recipient of this beautiful gift I try and practice it by serving my faith community and the communities that are in need of social justice.

**Kate DeVries**, Young Adult Ministry, Archdiocese of Chicago  
I recognize God's grace whenever my heart is moved with emotion. Often it is within a situation that is joyful or exciting, but sometimes it is around a happening that is sad or upsetting. Even and perhaps especially when things do not turn out the way I had hoped or expected, I look for and can usually find signs of God's presence — good in the midst of chaos, hope among the pain, and light in the darkness. I also experience God's grace when something I desire or for which I have prayed becomes a reality, as our God of surprises shines forth. Always God's grace calls me to see things differently — through the eyes of faith: wider, deeper, longer, with love and compassion.

**Capuchin Franciscan Father Randy Knauf**, associate chaplain at Northwestern University Sheil Catholic Center  
I see God's grace most in the interactions of people with other people and with the world. I work primarily with medical students and law students (at the Chicago campus), and these students are all about trying to better the world.

**Anne Marie Tirpak**, vicariate stewardship coordinator  
We are bathed in God's grace. I experience grace always in nature, often times in people and the arts and in the early morning and the late night. It's during the quiet and stillness of the early morning and the late night that I am aware that I am not by myself; I am feeling something greater than myself.

## lay leaders

**Graziano Marcheschi**, director of Lay Ministry Formation Programs for the archdiocese  
My work as a formation director is one of the great sources of grace in my life. Having to be focused on the spiritual growth of others forces me always to look inward and ask how I'm doing. When I offer input on formation days I find myself "preaching" as much to myself as to the participants. I hear my words and hear in them the call to recommit myself to living them. Helping others recognize the importance of prayer, spiritual direction and balance in their lives constantly reminds me of the need for those disciplines in my own life. My formation ministry has become a great and constant cycle of grace shared and grace received.

**Megan Flaherty**, going-to-be sixth-grader, Queen of Martyrs School  
I find God's grace when I'm in church and just about everywhere else.

**Caroline Rodriguez**, soon-to-be third grader, St. Andrew School  
Animals. But not bugs.

## kids

## writers and artists

**Father Andrew Greeley**, priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, writer, novelist and sociologist  
I find grace in stories and examples of forgiveness. We don't forgive others to earn God's forgiveness. That's a reality which is pure gift. However, we forgive to reveal, disclose, manifest, and celebrate God's forgiveness.



**Joseph Malham**, iconographer and artist-in-residence, St. Gregory the Great Parish  
As an artist my first reaction is to say that I find grace in the work God has allowed me to create to honor and lend beauty to our faith and liturgy. As this can all change in an instant the grace must rest on somewhat more solid ground. I would therefore say that God's grace is manifested to me in the community or communities (parish, family, friends) in which I find myself at any given moment. God's grace is most alive in the present moment, and it is there that I must strive to live completely.

**Judith Valente**, the author of "Twenty Poems To Nourish Your Soul" and a correspondent for PBS-TV, National Public Radio and Chicago Public Radio  
Often these moments [of grace] come to me when I encounter a good poem. Poetry helps me to slow down, to listen, to look, and look again. Poems often unlock for me those small sacred moments that inhabit the everyday. It is in these moments of supreme attentiveness, urged on by the poems, that I uncover God's many graces in my ordinary life.

