<u>June 19, 2023 ~ Monday 11th Per Annum ~ Year 1</u> Readings: II Corinthians 6:1-10; Psalm 98:1-4; Matthew 5:38-42

<u>What would this statement MEAN</u>: "We entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain"? Wouldn't we tend to answer WITH a Question: How COULD one "accept the grace of God IN VAIN"? Wouldn't grace's very power OVER-power ANY human UNDER-use or MIS-use OF grace? **More bluntly**: Can WE actually RESIST God's grace –and in some way...NULLIFY it?

God's own gift of Free Will yields the inevitable... "Yes." But before we either puff with pride or perish with presumption, I cite one of the most important books on Paul in decades...only THIS far: The author (J.M.G. Barkley) shows that Paul's use of the word "grace" has AT LEAST...SIX...distinct meanings; only one of which is "...God's extending beneficence to man."

"<u>Beneficence</u>," of course, is an easy Latin derivation meaning "GOOD-DOING." Obviously, God's GREATEST "good-doing" was the gift of Jesus Christ and the salvation He extends to us. And, as we know...people routinely DO "accept" the FACT of Jesus Christ... "in vain"...because they REJECT Him as...SAVIOR.

Sooo...if we wanted an idea of what it meant to accept Jesus...NOT "in vain"....but AS Savior...what might that LOOK like? Those with densely-Velcro-ed memories may recall when we had 1st Readings from Paul's Letter to the Romans. THEN, aI encouraged us to take Paul quite LITERALLY when he referred to... "the FAITH of...JESUS."

<u>Recognizing that we think of Jesus as an OBJECT of faith</u>, rather than as a PRACTITIONER of it, we had to ask: **What COULD the "faith" OF the Divine Jesus...BE..?..**

And Yours Truly suggested this: The "faith" of Jesus was Jesus's SEE-ing God's Whole Plan FOR His Saving Work – and ACCEPTING it...ANY-way...des-PITE foreknowledge of excruciating pain and death.

<u>Relatedly</u>, we recalled that, as part of PAUL's conversion, the Ascended Jesus said that He would SHOW Paul, *"All that he must SUFFER for my name."* Paul SAW...and he accepted HIS mission, also and anyway.

Jesus, we may be thankful, will "grace" few, if any, of us with such a divine "documentary" of our...FUTURE!

But these Two Examples OF Far-Seeing and Detailed Faith-Life point to our Lord's command in today's GOSPEL Reading. There, He says that, if a needy neighbor should ask us to go ONE mile with him, we should OFFER to go with him the SECOND mile.

One of the many, and one of my favorite, implications OF that statement came from a certain Cardinal Ratzinger...later..."alias Benedict" – who once called HIS homiletic hearers to TWO Things:

"You are," he said, **"to be a SIGN-POST to Jesus"...** That's the FIRST mile. **"A sign-post,"** the Cardinal continued, **"in order to become a BRIDGE ON which one can GO TO Him."**

THAT: being the "access bridge" TO Jesus – is the SECOND mile...which yields at least the suggestion...that ...if WE cross that bridge TO Jesus...we HAVE accepted the grace of God...but...perhaps...in MOST cases... we HAVE accepted it very nearly "in VAIN"...IF we cross that bridge...alone...

MASS INTENTION(S): 6:30 a.m.

8:00 a.m.

<u>Prayer At The Intercessions</u>: "Almighty God...who raised up your servant Paul to be a light in the world: Shine, we pray, in our hearts, that we also in our generation may show forth your praise, who called us out of darkness into your marvelous light; through Jesus Christ our Lord...Amen."