



Grace

... God's Undeserved Gift to Us

BY CELIA WALKOWICZ



Grace. A word that I've heard a lot in my life — which makes sense, considering that it is my middle name, and I grew up in the LCMS. Sometimes, because we hear it so much, it can begin to lose its effect. We know that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, and that we are sustained by that grace. When we have known this for so long, we can begin to just accept it instead of embracing it, but dark times like these call us to remember the full impact of grace.

When surrounded by chaos and darkness, we look for the light of grace. Speaking for myself, I have experienced plenty of darkness lately. I recently graduated from Concordia University Ann Arbor (CUAA), Class of 2020 — but because of the circumstances our world finds itself in, I did not walk across the stage on graduation day. I was also pulled from my full-time, church work internship. I have seen friends adjust wedding plans. Other friends have lost family members to COVID-19. Some friends are struggling with intense depression, anxiety, and isolation. I read hateful words on social media. These are my experiences. What are yours? Do you feel the darkness?

But, do you also feel the light that is breaking through? I've connected with friends I have not seen for a long time. I have spent more time on the phone with my grandparents, as I should have all along. I had my own special graduation celebration with my family. Friends demonstrated their trust in God when the plans they were making had to change. Some friends were creative with how they show love to one another from a distance. I have been blessed to lead a Zoom Bible study. My neighborhood comes together to support first responders who live there.

My community is stepping up to care for those in need. I have watched people show kindness to others in grocery stores. I have seen people sew masks for local hospitals, friends, and family. I have witnessed Comfort Dogs bring joy to people — virtually. The Gospel is being proclaimed on social media each and every day — especially on Sundays when Facebook is filled with online church services! I have seen God at work. I have felt Surrounded by the light of HIS Grace.

*For by grace you have
been saved through faith.
And this is not your own
doing; it is the gift of God,
not a result of works, so
that no one may boast.*

Ephesians 2:8–9

Because of this I designed my graduation cap for my celebration with the words “By Grace.” I wanted to remind myself and others of the incredible power of His grace. My degree was completed by Celia Grace, but it was possible only by the grace of God. I was brought to CUAA because of my faith, the faith which was worked in me by God’s grace alone. He has sustained me throughout my years by His grace — grace extended to me over and over. Now, I have the opportunity to shine the light of that grace to others.

Sisters in Christ, remember the grace by which God has called you. Consider these present trials joys, because they call us to persevere, and remember the good gifts that have come *down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows* (James 1:2-4, 17). Our God is steadfast in His grace and He surrounds us with it in this time and always. I pray that we embrace it fully and extend it to others.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved

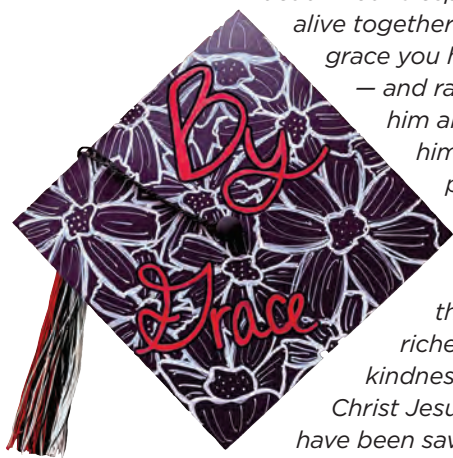
— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ

Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable

riches of his grace in kindness toward us in

Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:4-10). *Q*



Celia Grace Walkowicz grew up influenced by LWML and Mite Box giving at St. Luke Lutheran Church in Haslett, Missouri. In 2017, she attended the LWML National Convention as the Concordia University Ann Arbor Young Woman Representative. Celia just began her first call as a Director of Children and Youth Ministries at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Nashville, Tennessee, and is excited that the LWML ladies in her new congregation will see her featured in the LWQ!