

"There's someone keeping an eye on you..."



A few years ago, while I was spending my semester break at one of our convents at Kannur in Kerala, I was chatting with a very devout senior sister of ours and she quietly and secretively told me, "*Rekha, there is someone keeping an eye on you.*"

"*You mean....?*" I said, stunned and she nodded sagely.

Given my past experience of watching horror movies, I fearfully took the news that may be a ghost or some spirit was keeping an eye on me. **In fact, I was petrified.**

But before I could ask more, she asked me, "*Who's Grace?*" The name didn't ring any bells. '*Well, she's watching over you.*'

Even though I hadn't a clue who 'Grace' was, the thought of her phantom arms around me put a lump in my throat. I kept the message to myself and didn't share it with anyone. But hideously, I began inquiring. That evening I quietly went through the entire list of the deceased members of our Congregation to find out if 'Grace' was one of our long-deceased sisters watching me from above. I didn't get any convincing clues.

But thoughts of 'Grace' kept tugging at my sleeve as my vacations over there came to an end. It had been a great community and back in the hostel, I was going to really miss my lovely sisters. I was moved by how kind they were to me. Just four weeks spent over there together, birthdates were exchanged, support given, advices shared and many laughs had.

It was heart-warming to witness but also created a sense of unease as I noticed things about myself. The sweet-naturedness around me, put in stark contrast, the parts of myself that were impatient, judgmental and full of complaints and righteousness.

And I realised, may be, there's another word for this kind-heartedness that I was observing - '**GRACE**'. I wasn't entirely sure of its definition. I just knew it was what I was seeing and what I was not practising when in those less savoury headspaces.

I'm sure we all will have our own understanding, but for me, I realized, **GRACE** is something like, '*the ability to be kind even in the face of unkindness...knowing when to speak up or let things be...the patience to explain things or lovingly modify your speaking so others can understand*'.

GRACE is '*the compassion to withhold judgement, the wisdom to not participate in gossip, to be responsible for your words even in disagreement...the big-heartedness to be compassionate in your correction of others and the space to meet success and good fortune with humility. It's about really being present and coming out of love...it's all about honesty, integrity and generosity*'.

I began to wonder, when that lovely senior sister had asked me about 'GRACE' was she talking about a person or a state of being? **Was the 'GRACE' watching over me, perhaps, an invitation for me to inhabit the 'spirit of Grace'?**

Over the subsequent years, the more I've considered this, the more I've become aware of where I fall short. Where I could be kinder, wiser and more generous of spirit and where I'd like to do better, for no other reason, than, what else am I going to do while I'm on this Earth?

There is an ungracious one in all of us. One that was hurt, can be petty, small-minded, unfair and unkind. So perhaps the most gracious place to start with, is taking care of that ungracious one within, in whichever best way we can. ***Wish you a Happy All Saints' Day and a Blessed All Souls' Day!***

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