Living Our Life in Grace by Amy Dang, National Cursillo Vietnamese Coordinator, 36th National Cursillo Encounter – Wheaton College, IL, July 25, 2026

Please stand, if you are able, as we invoke the Holy Spirit. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Together, we pray:

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love.
Send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth.
O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructs the hearts of the faithful, by the light of the Holy Spirit grant that, in the same Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Before you sit down, I have one more prayer. It is called the Unity Prayer. This prayer was given to Elizabeth Kindelmann from Hungary, and Jesus Himself composed it. It is such a powerful prayer. It is a weapon! We have no room for darkness in here. We need to pray this prayer and kick it out because we are children of God. Darkness has no business here. So, let us pray together.

My Adorable Jesus,
May our feet journey together.
May our hands gather in unity.
May our hearts beat in unison.
May our souls be in harmony.
May our thoughts be as one.
May our ears listen to the silence together.
May our glances profoundly penetrate each other.
May our lips pray together to gain mercy from the Eternal Father. Amen.

Isn't that a beautiful prayer? It is so beautiful.

Introduction

First, I would like to apologize to all of you, especially my Vietnamese community. Cho em xin phép hôm nay được nói tiếng Anh vì chúng ta có nhiều anh chị ở đây nói tiếng Anh. I just asked my community for permission to speak English today.

I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I was supposed to write my rollo a few months ago, and I couldn't. I don't know why. I have so many thoughts in my heart and in my head, but nothing comes out. The minute I sit down to write, nothing comes out.

Last week, I was so determined because I felt terrible for the Spanish translation team, especially Sister Marisela. She asked for my rollo so she could translate it into Spanish. I told the Lord that I was determined to write something down. I took my laptop to Eucharistic Adoration and prayed, "Lord, give me something—give me something to write." And guess what? He gave me nothing! But instead, what I received was this: "If human language divides you, let the divine language bring you together." That's all I got!

The Lord also reminded me of an event that happened at the Region 5 Encounter last spring. During the Ultreya, I sat with three Spanish-speaking sisters. They spoke Spanish during the group sharing. I didn't understand a single word. I thought, "What are they saying?" But you know what? I understood everything in my heart. We cried. We hugged one

another because I could feel the love they had for the Lord and for each other. So let's not let human language separate us.

I have contemplated this a lot. Okay, fine. I'm not going to write anything down. But what language should I speak? I thought to myself, “If I speak Vietnamese, maybe 5% will understand. If I speak English, maybe 80% will understand.” And then, if I speak Spanish… Juan Ruiz told me before I came on stage that they had changed the program. He told me, “Amy, you need to speak in Spanish.” I assure you of one thing: if I speak Spanish, 0% will understand! But if I speak the language of love, I assure you, 100% will understand.

So today, I want to share with you from the bottom of my heart. Marisela told me, “Amy, please speak slowly so they can translate.” Sister Marisela, if I happen to say something you don't understand, chances are I don't understand it either. The Holy Spirit is speaking. Just say, “The Holy Spirit is doing the work.”

Before I begin my talk, do you want to play a game? Let's play a game, okay? Here is the game. Can you see the screen? It is very easy. There are four groups of eggs. Pick one group that you think contains chicken eggs. Does everybody have a number?

Who says group number one? Group one is ostrich eggs.
Who says group number two? Group two is lizard eggs.
Who says group number three? Group three is snake eggs.
Who says group number four? Group four is chicken eggs.

Is it hard to tell which group contains chicken eggs? Here is my point: from the outside, from a certain angle, or from far away, we might think they are chicken eggs when they are something else—like lizard eggs, ostrich eggs, or snake eggs. We could easily be mistaken when we judge things only by what we see from the outside.

There is a saying, “Don't judge a book by its cover.” In the same way, we can make the mistake of judging people or situations based only on what we see on the surface.

So, just like these eggs, we can sometimes look holy from the outside. We might go to Mass. We might receive Holy Communion. We might pray the Rosary. From the outside, people might look at us and say, “Oh, they're so holy!” Right?

And I thought to myself: sometimes the only thing that is truly holy—or the only thing that is truly hole—is my socks!

The topic I am sharing with you today is “Living Our Life in Grace.” You all know that Jesus is the Son of God by nature. We are sons and daughters of God by divine grace. Without grace, we are not His sons and daughters. For this reason, when we remain in grace, we dare to say, “Our Father, who art in heaven…” Otherwise, we wouldn't dare.

Self-Reflection

So, how do we remain in grace? From the outside, it is impossible to know who is living in grace because no one can see a person's soul except God alone. I can also see myself. I can examine my interior motives. God sees; I see. To live in grace, I need to reflect on myself. What tripped me up? What made me angry? Am I refusing to forgive my brothers and sisters? Am I not generous? Am I unwilling to make sacrifices? Am I complaining?

The list goes on and on. If I answer “yes” to all these questions, then I must admit that I can be selfish, angry, unforgiving, and so on. I am producing all those different kinds of eggs that you saw earlier—anything but chicken eggs!

And no one can see what is inside an egg just by looking at it from the outside. But eventually, the egg will hatch. And when it does, what comes out might be an ostrich, a lizard, or a snake.

In the same way, our poor behaviors, actions, and words will eventually bear bad fruit. That is the fruit I will bear if I am not living in God's grace. And the people around me will receive what I give them.

So often I ask the Lord, “Lord, please allow me to do an MRI of my soul and my heart. Let me do an X-ray and see where I am with You and where I am with my brothers and sisters.” And I ask God for the grace to use the laser beam and point to where I need to change. Only by God's grace can He allow me to see which areas of my life need to change.

Because sometimes I go through life thinking I do all the holy stuff, so maybe I am holy. But, oh gosh, I'm not even close! I am constantly struggling. What I realize is that living in grace and living out of grace can sometimes be only one step apart. All it takes is for me to get mad at someone. All it takes is getting angry and wishing something bad on someone in my heart. It's that easy!

I have a story to share with you. My mother passed away last month, in June 2026. It was very painful for all of us. My mother is the holiest woman I know. She was bedridden and nonverbal, and unable to eat, for 15 years after a stroke left her in that condition. She suffered quite a bit.

But before her stroke, she was a very active evangelist. She was a devoted Catholic. She was like us, Cursillistas, bringing people to Christ. She loved people. She brought the Eucharist to the sick. She visited the sick. She had the gift of healing. Whoever she laid hands on and prayed for was healed. That was a gift from God, and she used it well.

Seeing my mom, a good person, suffer for so long, I prayed that God would take her home when her time on earth was done. It broke my heart because of how much she suffered and struggled. In my heart, I was prepared for that day. I knew it was only a matter of time before my mom would go home to God.

My mother had eight children, and while she couldn't say anything, we knew Mom was still here. We had to behave! Most of us—I would say 90% of us—are very good Catholics. We are involved in church activities. We contribute our time, talent, and money to support the Catholic Church.

Last month, when she passed away, you should have seen her funeral. So many priests attended, as if it were the funeral of a priest. I would say more than 1,000 people attended the funeral Mass. Well, my mom was not that popular. But do you know why so many people came? Because most of her children are actively involved in the Catholic Church. We do so many things for the Catholic Church, and people came because of their connection to her children.

So, from the outside, we looked like a holy family. But I assure you, what is hole is our socks! Let me tell you: planning Mom's funeral was the biggest drama. After Mom's funeral, none of us were talking to one another. Why did good Catholics like us become this way? It breaks my heart.

So, the Lord used me in my family. I'm still trying to help my family reconcile. It is the toughest challenge. Also, in Cursillo, I'm serving my community wholeheartedly. I don't know what happened, but everywhere I turn, I see conflicts. I wonder: Why does everybody have conflicts? Among good people and good Catholics, why are there so many conflicts?

Why is that? And my answer is this: our hearts are wounded, and we don't know what to do with that hurt. We don't know what to do with that pain. God has given us a custom-made cross, and we don't know how to carry it.

Instead of turning to the Lord and saying, “Lord, this is so heavy. Can You help me carry it?” we turn to one another, and we use the cross the Lord gave us to beat each other. That's what I saw.

When I see what happens, I ask the Lord, “Lord, please allow me to be there for You.” Because with all the conflicts—whether in Cursillo, among friends, or among family members—who is hurting the most? It's not the person I hurt. I have come to realize that Jesus is hurting the most.

Why is Jesus hurting the most?

It’s not difficult to understand if we use the same analogy.

If a neighbor betrayed me or had an affair, it would certainly be wrong, but it probably wouldn’t break my heart in the same way. But if my own husband had an affair, that would be a completely different story. I would be devastated. I would feel as though I was dying inside.

Why? Because I love him. He is not just my neighbor or someone I know—he is my husband. He is my family. The closer the relationship, the deeper the pain when that relationship is betrayed.

In the same way, Jesus hurts most when we turn away from Him because He loves us deeply. We are not strangers to Him. We belong to Him. He created us, loves us, and desires a relationship with us.

That is why our betrayal hurts Him so deeply—not because He is simply offended, but because He loves us.

It hurts Jesus so much because we are His friends. We are His family. We are His disciples. We are so close to His heart.

Imagine St. John standing at the foot of the cross. Imagine him looking up at Jesus as He gives His life for him. You would expect John to say, *"Lord, You are dying on the cross for me. I love You. Thank You."*

Now imagine something completely different. Imagine John taking a sword and striking Jesus while He is hanging on the cross. It is difficult to imagine, isn't it?

And yet, in a spiritual sense, that is what we do when we hurt one another, hold on to anger, refuse to forgive, or let conflicts divide us.

When we hurt someone Jesus loves, we hurt Him. And because we are His family, our conflicts wound the heart of Jesus.

When we hurt each other, we are not hurting strangers. We are hurting members of Christ's own family—and Jesus feels that pain.

I often ask myself through meditation, "Who am I? Am I truly God's child? Am I His disciple? Am I His friend?" If the answer is yes—Amy, you are—then I should look at my behavior, because my behavior can cause so much pain and suffering for others. When they are wounded, my Lord is wounded. When they suffer, my Lord suffers with them. Their pain becomes His pain.

After Mother passed away, my family was a mess. My brothers and sisters in Cursillo hated me. I don't know why. But you know what? Sometimes everything is a mess. It makes me sad. It hurts me. But that doesn't bring me the deepest sorrow. What cuts deepest in my heart is thinking of my Lord Jesus, who loved me so much. He hung Himself on the cross for me. He allowed me to come so near to Him. He has given me an opportunity to participate in that love and that suffering.

And I hurt Him because I do not know how to turn to Him for help. Instead, I turned to my brothers and sisters and inflicted that pain and suffering on them, which hurt my Lord Jesus very much.

How to remain in His grace?

What can I do? What should I do? I ask myself these questions a lot. Sometimes I talk to myself. I don't know what is going on in my head! But I realize something: the Lord gave me weapons. I can turn every pain and suffering into a weapon as long as I live in grace.

So, living in grace, I have a choice. I can choose to live in grace or out of grace. The most powerful weapon the Lord gave me is my heart. For that heart to be full of His grace, I must empty it. I must empty it completely of whatever belongs to me. What belongs to me is nothing good. So, I need to empty it completely. Then I need to ask the Lord to fill my empty heart with His grace. How do I do that?

The best way to do that is through the Church. The Sacraments help me remain in grace. To stay in grace, I often go to Confession, sometimes once a week. I guard my thoughts, actions, and words very carefully. I fear offending my Lord. I would rather die than offend the One who loves me so much.

When I commit a sin, even a venial sin, I try to go to Confession as soon as I can. I know that many small sins, if I allow them to accumulate, can gradually weaken my will to love God and serve Him faithfully.

I also go to daily Mass. I spend time in Adoration once a week, and sometimes almost every day. I pray four Rosaries a day. I pray many other devotions, and I meditate on Scripture.

Prayer has become the foundation of my life—a place where I can turn to God, speak with Him, listen to Him, and draw closer to Him each day.

I cling to the means of grace that the Church has given me because I know that I cannot do this alone. I need God's grace every day. I need to rely on the channels of grace that He has given us through His Church. I cannot depend on my own strength. I need His grace to sustain me, guide me, and help me stay faithful.

And I do all this not because I am holy, but because I know how much I need the Doctor. And the best Doctor is Jesus Christ Himself. I need Him. I know that I am weak. I know that I cannot fight this battle alone. Every single day brings a new battle—a new opportunity to choose God, to resist temptation, to forgive, to love, and to stay faithful.

I cannot rely on myself. I must rely on God's grace. The Church gives us the means we need to remain in His grace. These are precious gifts that God has entrusted to us. I try to use those gifts well, and every day, I thank the Lord for giving them to me. Because I know that without His grace, I can do nothing. But with His grace, I can keep going.

But you know what? I often ask, "Lord, why is it that with the same Sacraments and the same prayers, some of us produce more fruit? Sometimes even I produce more fruit. Sometimes I produce less fruit. Why is that?" I have come to realize that it is my own disposition. It is my decision. It is my free will. The Lord is always ready to meet me, but am I ready for Him?

So, I pray often, "Lord, fill my heart with Your grace." Every time I struggle, I pray. Sometimes I don't know what to do. I pray. I pray day and night. If you add all that time together, it amounts to five hours a day, or even more, because I want to stay connected to the Lord. I love Him. I examine myself every moment of my life because I don't want to hurt my Lord. He has suffered so much already, and He continues to be hurt.

What to do with His grace?

I also realized that all the grace I receive from the Lord is not for me to enjoy by myself. I have a mission: to carry that love to people who do not know God and are dying spiritually, like Bishop Felipe mentioned yesterday. We have more ways to reach people nowadays, but people have become lonelier than ever. Do you agree?

Before I came on stage, a fellow Cursillista came to me, hugged me, and asked me to pray. She said she had prayed for me. She told me she had lost her daughter the week before. I lost my mom last month. I'm not going to mention who she is, but her daughter died by suicide.

You see, we are not given grace simply so that we can enjoy it for ourselves. So many people out there are waiting to receive what God wants to give them through us.

Think about the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. The Lord could have simply created thousands of loaves out of nothing. Instead, He began with a small offering—a few loaves and fish. He took what was given to Him, multiplied it beyond measure, and then what did He do? He placed it back into the hands of His disciples and told them to distribute it to the people.

That is how God works. He gives us His grace, but He also invites us to participate in His work. The grace comes from Him, but He chooses to work through us.

He needs our hands to serve, our feet to go where He sends us, our voices to speak His truth, and our hearts to love His people. The grace is His, but the hands and feet are ours.

So, let me share another story with you. A few weeks ago, a friend called me. She said, "Amy, I need you to pray for someone in Texas." I asked, "What happened?"

She said, "She fell many years ago and severely injured both of her knees. She broke her tailbone and suffered other injuries. She is now in a wheelchair. Can you pray for her? You have a gift of healing."

I said, "I do? I didn't know that!" Then I laughed and said, "Okay. If you'd like, I can call her and pray with her." Occasionally, when I pray for someone, the Lord heals them. Sometimes they are healed, but most of the time, they are not. So, I simply said, "Okay, let me pray with her and see what happens."

When I called, I listened to her story. It was heartbreaking. She told me that her left leg was numb and that she was in severe pain. I listened patiently to everything she had been through. Then I said, “Okay, let’s pray together.” So, I prayed for her. Suddenly, she said, “Oh! The numbness is gone!”

I thought, “Wow! Did that really happen?” One leg was healed, although the other leg was still hurting. I was sitting there thinking, “Oh my, this is amazing! Okay, let’s keep praying.”

Then, suddenly, she said, “Amy, I see pink flowers. They look like orchids. They are falling from heaven onto my lap—and then they disappear.” And I thought, “Oh my! Now she’s seeing things!” So, I asked her, “Do you often see things like that?” She said, “No.” I said, “Praise the Lord! He gave you flowers—spiritual flowers!”

The very next day, she was scheduled to have surgery on her knee. Before the surgery, I told her, “Ask the doctor to scan your leg one more time. Make sure the injury is still there before they operate.”

She went to the hospital and did exactly that. The doctor scanned her leg and, after reviewing the results, told her that she still needed surgery. And I thought, “Lord… it didn’t work this time.”

After the surgery, she called me to thank me for being there for her and praying for her. And that was when I began to understand something. Maybe the healing wasn’t meant to be physical.

Sometimes, God heals the body. But more often, He heals the heart. Sometimes, what a person needs most is not for their circumstances to change, but to know that they are not alone—that God sees them, God loves them, and God is right there with them in the midst of their suffering.

And sometimes, our greatest gift to someone is simply to be there—to listen, to pray, to walk with them, and to remind them that God has not abandoned them. Perhaps the Lord needed me at that moment simply to be there—to listen to her story, to hold her hand through prayer, and remind her that she was loved. And perhaps those pink flowers she saw were a sign of consolation. Maybe they were God’s way of saying, “I am here. I have not forgotten you. I love you.”

She needed to know that the Lord loved her. And how did He show her that love? Through friendship. Through prayer. Through someone who was willing to stop, listen, and be there.

That experience taught me that God can touch a person’s heart through something as simple as friendship. We may not always be able to take away someone’s physical suffering, but we can bring them the presence of Christ.

Sometimes, we are the hands God uses to hold someone. We are the voice He uses to comfort someone. We are the friend He sends to remind someone that they are loved. And sometimes, that is the healing God intends to give.

Let me share one more example with you. Last week, my cousin passed away in Los Angeles. My sister decided to drive down from Northern California to attend the funeral. It’s about a seven-hour drive each way.

Her plan was simple: she took only one day off from work and said, “I’m going to drive down there, go to the funeral Mass, and come right back.” Seven hours there and seven hours back—in one day. That’s a lot of driving!

But my sister was very angry with everyone in the family, and she didn’t want anyone to go with her. She is driving 5 people in the car with her. I became very concerned. By the way, the week my mom passed away, my sister had two accidents.

So, something inside me was telling me, “This is not a good idea.” I insisted to help her drive, but she continued to refuse my help. I don’t know why she was angry with me, too!

The next day, I knew she was leaving around noon. I went to Mass that morning and asked the Lord, “What should I do? If I show up at her house, she’s going to yell at me. But if I don’t go, what happens? What if she has another accident? I can’t sit here and do nothing.”

So, after mass I told Jesus that I’m going to have thick skin. I am going with her. I went home, grabbed some stuff, and forgot almost everything else—my makeup, my toiletries, everything! Then I went to her house and waited outside for two hours.

Finally, she agreed to let me go with her—but she still wouldn't let me drive. And I thought, *That was the whole reason I wanted to come!*

But I said, "Okay, okay. That's fine. How about this? Just put my name on the rental car agreement. I don't have to drive. But if you need me, I'll be there for you. Just in case."

Finally, she agreed to add my name to the rental agreement. Sure enough, she started driving. About thirty minutes later, she looked at me and said, "I'm so sleepy. Can you drive?" And I thought, *That's exactly what I was talking about!* So, I smiled and said, "Of course. Let me drive."

My intention for that trip was very simple: I wanted to help my sister. But you know what? The Lord had something completely different in mind. He was sending me there for a mission I knew nothing about.

I arrived at the funeral, and a woman I had never met came up to me. She wasn't even related to our family. She sat down next to me. Then she began telling me her story—her story of suffering, pain, and everything she had been carrying for a long time. It was a long and painful story. I simply listened.

And then I said, "Okay. Let's pray together." So, I prayed with her. She started crying. And I thought, "Lord, I don't know what I did to her. Why is she crying?" Then she said, "I feel so much better. Somebody is listening to me." Afterward, she began to feel better—physically and emotionally.

Sometimes that is all someone needs—a person who will stop, listen, and remind them that they are not alone.

After the funeral, we got back into the car and started the seven-hour drive home. And once again, the Lord had something waiting for me. There was a couple in the car who had been living together as boyfriend and girlfriend, but they were not married.

As we talked during that long drive, something happened in their hearts. I believe the Lord was working in them. They decided they wanted to get married in the Catholic Church. The boyfriend agreed to convert to Catholicism. Praise the Lord!

But the story wasn't over yet. He then said to me, "My brother is in the ICU. He could die at any time. Can you go talk to him?" I agreed. He told me a little about his brother. His brother was a seventy-year-old autistic man who was very sick. He would not cooperate, and the doctors and nurses simply didn't know what to do with him.

The next day I went to visit him at the hospital. He looked at me strangely. I sat down and started talking with him. And then, suddenly, he smiled at me.

He lifted his gown and showed me his stomach. Then he said one word: "Hurt." He pointed to his stomach and asked me to touch it. I touched it and it was hard like a rock. Again, he said, "Hurt."

And suddenly I understood. The reason he was so upset was because nobody understood that he was in pain. He wasn't simply being difficult. He was suffering. He was hurting, and he couldn't communicate what was happening to him.

I told the nurse to give him pain medication. The nurse brought the medication and tried to give it to him. He said, "No." She offered it to him again and he refused. I told the nurse to let me try. I leaned toward him and said, "Oh, honey. You're going to feel better. This will help you. Come on." I sweet-talked him a little bit, and right away, he opened his mouth wide and took the medication without hesitation.

But the story wasn't over yet. I began talking to him about the Lord. I told him about God. I told him how much God loves him. I said, "God knows that you are suffering. He knows your pain. He loves you."

I spent many hours with him. And eventually I asked him, "Do you want to be God's child?" He said, "Yes." And I thought, "Lord, what do I do? If I call a priest, what if he doesn't make it through today?"

So, I baptized him that same day and gave him the name Joseph. I did what I understood the Church teaches us to do in that situation. I have spoken with his family, and I told them that perhaps he may be able to receive other Sacraments as well.

And you know what I realized again? We live in a world of advanced technology and remarkable medical treatments. Doctors can diagnose and treat so many physical illnesses, and modern medicine can do incredible things.

But people are not only physically sick. More often, they are spiritually sick as well. Doctors know how to treat the body. But the heart is left untreated. And that is where we come in.

We are called to care not only for people's physical needs, but also for their spiritual needs—to listen, to pray, to love, and to remind them that God has not forgotten them.

Because sometimes, what a person needs most is not another treatment for the body, but someone who will help bring healing to the heart.

Isn’t that amazing that God can use us in places we never expected?

I thought I was going to Los Angeles to help my sister. But the Lord had a completely different mission for me. He wanted me to meet a woman who needed someone to listen.

He wanted me to be part of a couple's decision to return to the Catholic Church.

He wanted me to meet a sick man who simply needed someone to understand his pain. And He wanted me to tell that man that he was loved by God.

I thought I was going on a fourteen-hour drive. But God was sending me on a mission.

Conclusion

And that brings me back to the question: What does it mean to live a life in grace? For me, it begins with one simple question: Who am I?

If I say, “I am a child of God,” then I need to live like His child. If I say, “I am a friend of Jesus,” then I need to live like His friend. If I say, “I am His disciple,” then I need to live like His disciple.

Because grace is not something we receive simply to make us feel good or to make us look holy from the outside. Grace changes us from the inside out. It changes how we think, how we speak, how we forgive, how we love, and how we respond when we are hurt.

And then that grace must go somewhere. God does not fill our hearts with His grace so that we can keep it for ourselves. He fills us so that He can pour His love through us into the lives of others.

There is someone out there who needs you. Someone needs you to listen. Someone needs you to forgive. Someone needs you to pray. Someone needs you to show up. Someone needs to hear, “You are loved. You are precious. God has not forgotten you.”

You may think you are simply going to work, going to church, visiting a friend, attending a funeral, or taking a fourteen-hour drive. But you never know what mission God has placed along the way. You may think you are going somewhere for one reason, while God has another reason entirely.

So, when He asks you to go—Go! When He asks you to reach out—reach out! When He asks you to listen—listen! When He asks you to forgive—forgive! When He asks you to pray—pray! And when you don't know what to do, turn to Him. Because you don't have to do it alone.

Brothers and sisters, we are His children. We are His friends. We are His disciples.

We have received His grace. Now let us live in that grace. Let us carry that grace. Let us share that grace. Let us become the hands that serve, the feet that go, the voice that comforts, and the heart that loves.

And when people encounter us, may they encounter something more than good people or good Catholics. May they encounter Jesus.

So, brothers and sisters, have no fear. Go out into the world. Live in grace. Live as His children. Live as His disciples. And proclaim the Good News—not only with your words, but with your lives. Because the world is waiting for the love of Christ. And perhaps the person He wants to reach next is waiting for Him to reach them through you.

De Colores!