

God's Grace is Not a Competition: Receive, Rejoice, Respond.

We have a natural habit of comparing. We compare our homes, families, children, jobs — and even our relationship with God. "Why does he have more than I do? Why was she blessed and not me?"

We see it every day. When someone buys a new car, we immediately pressure our partner to buy one for us. When a neighbor builds a new house, we feel our own house is no longer enough. When a friend buys new jewelry, we want the same — or even better. We see another family and think, "Their children are doing better than mine." Someone gets a promotion and we wonder, "Why him and not me?"

This weekend's Gospel gives us a clear answer: with God, there is no competition. Dear friends, comparison slowly turns gratitude into resentment. A person who once prayed, "Thank you, Lord, for all I have," begins to pray, "Why don't I have what they have?" We forget that God has not called us to run somebody else's race. Each person's journey is unique.

St. John Chrysostom, reflecting on this Gospel, points out that the early workers became angry not because they lost anything, but because they could not rejoice in another's blessing. He gives us the Christian response: "Let us be thankful not for our own blessings alone, but also for those of others."

St. Augustine adds, "Would you like to see God glorified by you? Then rejoice in your brother's progress."

What a transformation that would bring! Imagine spouses who rejoice when the other succeeds instead of competing. Imagine parents who can genuinely celebrate another person's child. Imagine parishioners who are truly grateful when another ministry flourishes, instead of thinking, "I have been here longer."

Another person's blessing is not your loss. Another person's new car, house, or success does not make you less loved by God. There is enough grace in God's house for everyone.

This weekend's gospel also reminds us it is never too late for grace. Someone may return to Church after years away. How should we respond? Not "Where have you been?" but "Welcome home!" God does not give up on people, and neither should we. God's ways are not our ways. We think I worked harder, so I deserve more. But God's way is grace — a free gift.

So this week, let us live by three simple prayers:
When God blesses me, I will give thanks.
When God blesses you, I will rejoice.
When God gives me grace, I will share it.
Because God's grace is not a competition.

Fr. Anthony