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Comparisons

Fr. Randy Roche

Loyola Marymount University

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Comparisons

Many of us, when we suffer a mishap or sickness, think of someone we know who has a far more serious event or condition that he or she endures. We are reasonable people, so we often resort to thinking as our first means for dealing with something unpleasant. By comparing ourselves with someone in more difficult circumstances, we try to minimize our own experience – usually with minimal benefits.

When we suffer even minor inconveniences, we are aware of them not just in our minds, but in our bodies and in our spirits. We have thoughts about the illnesses, setbacks, or frustrations, and we have feelings of anxiety, anger, or perhaps an increase of energy. We have human experiences that are uniquely ours. Whether or not someone else has greater pains or more grievous challenges does not change our particular responsibilities to deal with our own hurts and disappointments.

If we consider how God's love moves in us and in those with whom we might make comparisons, our focus changes from who might be better off to gratitude for graces God gives us for properly engaging with a missed flight, health problem, or painful loss. The emphasis on God's love takes us to the level of our spirituality, where denial and rationalization are out of place. We cannot explain how it is that one person faces life-threatening cancer, and another has only a cut finger; or that I have a slight injury that a medical practitioner can cure, while many, many people have severe health problems with no access to medical care. We can turn aside from the realities that confront us, or, in God's love, we can find from within us the appropriate response to each situation we face.

The question is not whether we are better or worse off than someone else. In our response to God's love, we can question ourselves, positively: Are we becoming more generous as we live through the events that are uniquely ours? Do we accept the challenges that occur in our lives? What we do now, with the gifts and graces we receive, is pleasing to God, and is the distinctively human means through which we put our trust and love of God into actions rather than mere words. We might not see ourselves as heroic; the difficulties we face might be less than what others appear to undergo, but our honest response to the realities within and around us are the only and also the best means for saying "yes" to God.

Love is not "fair," and love is not "equal." God's love for us and ours for God is literally incomparable. There never has been and never will be the same interaction of God and a child of God's as is our particular relationship. God does not make any two of us the same, and yet loves us each with a unique, all-encompassing love. We ourselves do not love any two people in exactly the same way.

God gives differing calls and invitations to different people. And we respond according to our personalities, the interpretations we make of our experiences and the inspirations we receive directly from God. Our ultimate responsibility is to live as best we can in the present, according to the particular circumstances of our lives, one day at a time, and one grace at a time. Such a life is beyond compare.