



Reflecting God's Generosity



Sunday Reflection With Fr. Rafal

Dear Friends in Christ,

Today's Gospel of the Vineyard Workers made me think about my previous parishioner. Let's say his name is Alex (that's not his real name, just to protect his identity) and he was a widower when he married a beautiful woman twenty-some years ago. One day, he said to me, "Fr. Rafal, pretty soon I will be celebrating my fiftieth anniversary." Knowing him and his wife I said, "But, Alex, you and Melanie haven't been married that long."

"No," he said, "but I am also counting the years I was married to my first wife." It turns out that Alex looks at his years of marriage as years of service - and he wants credit for every one.

The vineyard workers who started at the beginning of the day were a bit like Alex. They wanted due credit for every hour they worked. The irony here is that if the owner would have paid them first and sent them on their way, there would have been no problem. They would have been happy with their day's wage. The problem came when they compared themselves to others: "Hey, those guys who worked one hour got a full day's wage. I worked twelve hours. I should get twelve wages." They thought they would receive more.

When we compare ourselves to others, we easily fall into envy and resentment. I had a strange experience of that when I was listening to an interview of a presidential candidates years ago. The interviewer asked him how he would define "middle class." The candidate said that the middle class includes people earning up to \$150,000 a year. All of a sudden I was thinking, "One hundred fifty thousand dollars. I am far from making that." I stopped and I had to ask myself: Where did that thought come from? I'm a priest. For my needs I am receiving plenty, especially when I consider the poor - and those who are in need in my own parish.

The devil wants us to compare ourselves to those who have received something we didn't get. He tries to fill us with resentment, anger and envy. God, on the other hand, wants us to reflect on His generosity - how much he has given us. And to remember the poor - those who have so much less and need our help. If I can put it this way: The devil wants us to stew; God wants Stewardship. One brings misery, the other brings joy.

God will give each person proper credit. He will honor Alex for his years of faithful marriage to Melanie - and to his first wife whom he cared for in her final illness. None of us need worry whether God will give us our due. Rather, we should focus on his generosity. He gives much more that we could ever deserve - or ask for.

To conclude I would like to restate my main point: When we compare ourselves to others - thinking we should receive more - we become resentful and envious. When we focus on God's generosity, we become joyful stewards.

Have a Blessed Week!

Fr. Rafal Ligenza

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