

Non-Comparing Love

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)

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A skill that we are taught from a young age is how to compare. Comparing helps us develop our minds and figure out how things relate to each other. This is a healthy and necessary skill, but one that can lead us astray if we let it take over our entire lives. Reaching the point of comparing ourselves to others can really ruin our sense of self-worth.

In today's Gospel from *Mark*, we come across a poor widow who refused to compare herself to others. Even though many rich people were surrounding her at the treasury, she stood her ground. As we are told, she wasn't ashamed or embarrassed to put her two coins into the collection. She knew she didn't have much, but what she did have, she confidently offered. Her offering was literally nothing in comparison to everyone else's, but Jesus noticed and admired her for it. "Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, amen I say to you, this poor widow...has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

Comparing ourselves with others can paralyze us from living our own lives. Whenever we are so caught up in societal norms and etiquette, we undermine our own contributions that God wants us to make. We may be so ashamed or embarrassed with ourselves that we try to hide or go unnoticed. This is no way to live.

The good news is that with Jesus, there is no one standard that we all have to fit into. There are so many circumstances and situations in our lives which make us all radically different. What is required of someone else may not be required of me and what is required of me may not be required of someone else. This should give us the strength to only strive after being the best version of ourselves. That is life.

Learning not to compare ourselves with others is a lifelong task that we fail at many times. The spiritual author and priest Henri Nouwen reflected: "Our God, who is both Father and Mother to us, does not compare. Never. Even though I know in my head that this is true, it is still very hard to fully accept it with my whole being...I am convinced that many of my emotional problems would melt as snow in the sun if I

could let the truth of God's motherly non-comparing love permeate my heart." (*Return of the Prodigal Son*, 103-4) It is true, so many of our problems stem from comparing ourselves with everyone else's standards. God's non-comparing love frees us to simply be ourselves, in all our poverty.

We will accept our self-worth from God only insofar as we stop comparing ourselves to others.

Who am I comparing myself to right now in my life? We have to let it go or we will never find our self-worth. There will always be someone out there better, smarter, or more talented than me. Instead, let us look to this strong woman, this poor widow, in our Gospel and know that our God never compares us to those around us. Never.