

DEALING WITH COMPETITION

How do we live as “Holy Families” when we win or don’t win?

The society we live in is a paradox when it comes to winning, achievements, and success. On the one hand, we live in a very competitive culture where winning seems to be everything. This is reflected in the saying, “Second place is just first loser.” On the other hand however, children and young people are often rewarded simply for showing up, no matter the level of effort put in. As Holy Families it is our job to help our children navigate that dichotomy and make sense of the mixed messages of winning versus losing, and success versus failure.

Perhaps the problem arises from a faulty sense of success and failure. Talking to young people about the meaning of success is important because the world says success is: money, fame, notoriety, lots of possessions, only A’s in school, and so on. And yet many of us will never live up to that standard, and frankly even Jesus wouldn’t have met those criteria!

So what does our Lord Jesus say about what success looks like? For that we can go to the Beatitudes in scripture:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5)

Neither winning nor losing defines us. God’s love is what gives us our identity.

Jesus’ definition of success is to do God’s work and live by his will. Even when we fail completely or if we come in first place, have we done it for the glory of God — or our own glory? Failure simply means getting up and trying again - as many times as it

takes. Failure is an opportunity to grow, learn, develop, trust, and persevere. Failure is only failure if we give up and never try again.

We can win with humility and we can lose with grace because we are children of God who loves us no matter if we are number one or last. This frees us to win, lose, and try again knowing that none of that defines us. What defines us God’s love for us.



Topical conversation starters to help parents stay “on the same page” with each other and their families.

Things to Pray and Talk About:

- How do you look at winning and losing in your family? What messages do you send to your children about competition?*
- How do the beatitudes shape your understanding of what success is as people of faith? How is that contrary to how the world defines success?*
- How do you teach your children that working hard is its own reward, rather than always expecting something in return for their efforts?*

Asking for God’s Blessing:

Loving God, your Son Jesus taught that we are blessed when we are humble and serving others in your name. Remind us that we don’t have to win or be the best at everything in order to gain your love and approval. Fill us with your Spirit that we would be thankful in all circumstances, both winning, losing, or just playing along. Amen.