

**Kindness is at risk in American society. We still expect it from customer service, the wait staff at restaurants, and from our neighbors. But in a contest between kindness and anger in our culture today, anger often wins out. Some people in business, social media, and politics perversely consider anger a virtue. They seek retribution for offenses.**

**You may understand anger against enemies, but sometimes we direct anger against people we love. After a bad day at work, you may have come home only to take it out on your spouse and kids, whom you love. If you cannot resolve problems with the people directly responsible for them, you may level your anger against someone else. You may abuse your authority by releasing your anxiety against people who are not responsible for it, as if spreading helplessness is better than confronting it.**

**At other times we direct our anger against perfect strangers. At the wheel of a car, we have a destination in mind, a time we want to arrive, respect for the rules of the road, reliance on a vehicle we've come to use as an extension of our bodies, and often a ridiculous conviction that every other driver on the road is an idiot. We often don't consider they too have a designation in mind, a time they want to arrive, and respect for the rules of the road. No, we often presume they deliberately chose this road and this lane to make my life miserable, and they should pay for that. Never mind that many other drivers are thinking the same thing about me. Never mind that that annoying slow-moving truck may be carrying goods I ordered online yesterday. The steering wheel of cars is a weapon of anger. Kindness is at risk.**

**You may think God gets angry as we do in any of these categories: seeking retribution for people who offended him, punishing us whom he loves when he should be taking out his anger on someone else, or when we are minding our own business and God arbitrarily gets as angry with us as we do with strangers on the road. Even if we envision an angry God, we still hold the comforting belief that he will forgive. Sometimes that comfort prods our decision to sin: "I shouldn't do this, but I can always go to confession and get forgiven." But our admiration for God should turn us away from sin, not toward it.**

**In our responsorial today, we heard these beautiful words from Psalm 103: "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and rich in mercy. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so strong is his mercy for those who fear him." We sing it today because this psalm also says of the Lord, "He made known his ways to Moses," as we heard in today's first reading.**

**Psalm 103 should reassure us that no matter our sins, no matter how angry God may be, God is still rich in mercy. These verses also set goals for our own behavior. Loving God means not taking advantage of his mercy. Loving our neighbor means imitating God. No matter the grievance, no matter the humility we suffer at work, no matter the behavior of other drivers, people should be able to say these things about each of us as a Christian: "You are compassionate and gracious. You are slow to anger. You are rich in mercy." Kindness is at risk, but we can make it our own.**