

## Identifying and Overcoming Envy

As we grow up, most all of us experience others having more than we do. Sometimes it's the neighbor kid with a swimming pool or the latest video game system; or maybe the older sibling gets new clothing while the younger sibling gets more "hand-me-downs." Sometimes as we age the neighbor has nicer things than we do, or we compare ourselves to that coworker who got a raise or promotion, or even that other sibling who made it big. On the one hand, it's not a big deal if we daydream a bit, thinking of the Publisher's Clearing House prize patrol showing up. But sometimes, envy can creep into our hearts.

It's not a sin that comes up too much in confession, but it is an important thing to identify in our souls.

Last week in our Gospel, we had the story of the day laborers who each are brought into the vineyard to work, some longer at the start of the day to the finish, some only an hour or two at the end of the day, but all are paid the same. The ones who worked longer grumble, but they aren't cheated; they are still given a fair day's pay. The owner of the vineyard asks them if they are envious. This week, Paul says in our second reading to do nothing out of "selfishness or out of vainglory; rather humbly regard others as more important than yourselves." He then speaks of Jesus, who "though He was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave.."

The challenge for us is to also embrace humility, and strive to serve one another. Doing that entails trying to grow in virtue, and root out sin. So what to do with envy?

The first step is doing a good examination of conscience and identifying it. If we are blind to envy, it'll just continue to grow.

We can then pray about it, or bring it to confession too. A confessor can give good advice, and we can often find peace in prayer to move past it.

Then, we can come up with concrete steps dealing with the person we are envious towards. This entails praying for them; talking to them; maybe doing something nice for them; trying to force ourselves to give them a compliment or congratulations or praise for their gifts.

It's also worthwhile to develop a team mentality. All of us are on God's team; we are workers in the vineyard. In sports, most people couldn't tell you the names of the middle relievers in baseball or offensive line guys in football save for the people who really follow the game. But many might talk about the quarterback's throw or the home run that was hit. But it wasn't the individual who won, it was the team. As we say "Our" Father not "My Father," we have to remember teamwork matters. Yes, we have an individual relationship with God that is unique. But we all want to make the world a better place, and love one another. So rather than enjoying the downfall of a rival or

someone we're envious of, maybe we can try to be thankful for the good things they bring to the world.

At the same time though, let's not get down on ourselves. God made you and me, and we are here for a reason. Each of us has talents; so we need to look at what we've been given, and recognize that it helps the world in its own way. All of us can glorify God.

Lastly, we can embrace humility. Just look some of our amazing saints who did this. There's Saint Andre Bessette, a humble brother who spent most of his time as a porter and laundry worker at a monastery for 40 years; Saint Martin de Porres, the "saint of the broom" often seen in icons holding a broom, who worked as a monastery servant in Peru; unable at the time to become a full fledged religious because of racist laws prohibiting it, as he was of African and Native American descent; and Saint Therese of Lisieux, known as the "Little Flower" who embraced the "Little Way," realizing she might not do "great things" in the eyes of the world, but would do little things with great love. All of these did people did incredible things with their lives to make this world better. But they didn't seek out recognition or prestige; they truly emptied themselves like Jesus, and so should we.

It's so easy to compare ourselves to others, but what good is that? Envy can often mix in with wrath too and cause such division and hate. Let's not worry if the other person gets greater recognition in the eyes of the world or the family or workplace. Rather let's together focus on building up God's kingdom, realizing that what ultimately matters is love of God and one another, and making this world a better place, doing so to bring about God's glory rather than our own.

Have a blessed week,

Fr. Paul