

Envy & Admiration

In our continued look at the seven deadly sins and seven life-giving virtues, this week we look at envy and its antidote admiration. According to the Catechism, envy is defined as "*Resentment or sadness at another's good fortune, and the desire to have it for oneself.*" The American author Gore Vidal once remarked, "Whenever a friend succeeds, a little something in me dies."

We can be sad or resentful when someone else has something and we *want* it. For example, she sings well, but I don't. He has a puppy, but I don't. On the other hand, we can be sad or resentful when someone else has something and we *don't* want him or her to have it. For example, he has the newest iPhone. I wish he didn't have it. She is popular and I don't want her to be. In both cases, envy eats you alive.

Envy is different from jealousy. Jealousy is an excessive love of the possessions you already have. Envy, on the other hand, is sadness or resentment over other people's gifts and/or successes. With envy, not only is there sadness or resentment over what someone has, but also a desire for them to be deprived of it. The ninth commandment prohibits envy of another's wife, while the tenth prohibits envy of another's goods.

Unfortunately, envy is a deep and dark sin that rejoices when others suffer. It can lead to detraction wherein one says bad things about another so you can be exalted. At its worst, envy can lead to violence against others such as when Cain killed Abel (Gn. 4:5-8). Many crimes of passion have been committed because of envy.

Envy is directly opposed to charity. Whereas pride is an affront against God, envy is directly opposed to the love of neighbor. One can envy another person's material goods (e.g., car, home, computer) or spiritual goods (e.g., the ability to sing, teach, influence others, etc.). St. Thomas taught that the more important good envied, the graver the sin. Hence, the envy of spiritual goods is graver than material ones.

The poet Dante punishes the envious by having their eyelids sewn shut. Their whole life is spent looking at others. "What's he doing? What does she have?" With their eyelids closed, the envious are incapable of looking at others. The fundamental blindness of the

envious is that they believe their value rests upon what they have. In reality, however, God loves us for who we are.

The antidote for envy is admiration. Admiration regards someone or something with respect or warm approval. While envy is cold and saps the soul, admiration uplifts and motivates it. For example, when watching professional sports or the Olympics, we stand in awe at the skills and talents of those competing. Admiration can readily turn into gratitude. We can admire a person's talent or skill and thank God for it.

If you are a person who struggles with envy, there are some practical things you can do. For example, go out of your way to praise someone of whom you are envious. Speak well about him or her whenever possible. Additionally, pray and ask God to bless him or her. Give thanks to God for the gifts that He has bestowed!

In the end, keep in mind that we are all part of the Body of Christ, a body that is endowed with many different gifts and talents. You have gifts that others do not. Your gifts and those of others are meant to build up the Body of Christ for the glory of God!

~St. Thérèse, pray for us!



Envy
(Saps and drains us)



Admiration
(Uplifts and motivates us)