

Fr. Perozich comments —

It is often said that Pride is the first sin.

I contend that ENVY is the first movement toward that sin, the desire to take away from others any power, possession, pleasure, prestige that the other enjoys which the Envious does NOT himself enjoy according to the Envious' particular idea of justice.

If I cannot have a particular thing, and if everyone else cannot have it, then neither can you have it. It reminds me of the sister in Catholic school who used to ask the student enjoying candy or gum, "Did you bring enough for everyone? No? Then spit it out."

Justice and Mercy are two sides of the same coin.

Justice is the virtue which gives to others their due, in basic rights, reward, and punishment.

Mercy is the virtue which gives more than what is due in basic rights, reward, and in punishment.

Justice binds us all in the giving of rights and reward.

Punishment better rests with higher authorities in family, society, and with God in heaven.

Yet this punishment, a person's desire to hold others accountable, can take away one's peace in the sin of ENVY.

I am so relieved that I do not get the punishment that my thoughts, words, and deeds might deserve according to strict justice.

God, in His mercy, forgives, corrects, teaches, and loves me back into the proper relationship with him and with others to give me peace.

Once I have received that mercy, I must make the effort to grant it to others rather than my idea of deserved justice in punishing.

The political machinations of institutions such as church, government, NGO's, education, social institutions are rife with ENVY. More than ever I experience such negativity from those with so much power, possessions, prestige, such hate with no pleasure except when depriving others of some good: independence, wealth through inflation and increased gas prices, the Latin Mass, the priestly vocations of many faithful men, the life of the unborn, the God given sexuality of His beloved creatures, and on and on.

These powerful men and women manifest ENVY in control of others, usually exempting themselves who make the rules, taking away from others who have possessions in order to reduce them to the state of others who have fewer possessions, while the controllers enrich themselves with power, possessions, prestige, and pleasure.

The author, Mark Witney, shows a constant need for vigilance against ENVY which attempts to creep into the soul yet gives it no pleasure..

The story of the Prodigal Son illustrates that the elder son's demand for his idea of justice blinds him to all the wealth, pleasure, power, and prestige that he already possesses in the family of his father particularly in his position as eldest son who in reality speaks for his father. There is no need to demand a particular sense of justice from the head of the family, rather just to continue to enjoy what he already has.

Among some cultures, the evil eye is thought to be a curse from ENVY which can deprive those upon whom the curse falls.

In reality, the evil eye is the curse upon the one who is on the constant looking at others' business, for what others have that I may not have, and the growing evil to take away from others their unique possessions, power, prestige, and pleasure.

Dante's purgatorial example of eyes sewn shut shows a relief from ENVY, since the person can no longer see what others have, and thus can be purged of the sin.

MAGNANIMITY, to magnify, is the ANTIDOTE to ENVY. To exercise magnanimity, each person should take an inventory of his particular gifts given to him to enjoy and to offer to others in order to build up the other rather than to try to impose a particular view of justice upon other people. In this the MERCY of God is manifest. Peace reigns in the heart. ENVY is conquered, and its expression in PRIDE is quelled.

Psalm 103, a psalm of Thanksgiving is a helpful penance. The EUCHARIST which means THANKSGIVING offers the fullness of the integration of the justice and mercy of God in His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, bringing true peace to the soul, conquering sin, and bathing the soul with grace and joy,.

Envy - The Only Sin With No Pleasure

Written By Mark Watney



The Yorck Project, 2002 (Wikipedia Commons)

Bertrand Russell, the brilliant English philosopher and atheist, did not believe in sin — yet argued that Envy is, “The most unfortunate,” of all human passions:

Not only does the envious person wish to inflict misfortune and do so whenever he can with impunity, but he is also himself rendered unhappy by envy. Instead of deriving pleasure from what he has, he derives pain from what others have.

Traditionally ranked just below Pride — the deadliest of the Seven Sins (or passions as he called them) — Envy seems unique in its absolute inability to give us any real pleasure. It is, argues Christian philosopher Jeff Cook, the most miserable of the Seven. Whereas Lust, Greed, Anger, Sloth, Gluttony, and Pride all offer the sinner the pleasures of sex, money, power, ease, food, or self-esteem, **Envy offers the sinner *nothing* but misery. Even unlike Greed, its closest relative, it refuses to be satisfied with more until *you* — the envied one — has less;** a scenario which could only happen in your private kingdom.

Why are we then so easily infected by this miserable green “virus” which provides so little reward? I would like to explore this unique form of misery, and why we refuse to protect ourselves from a sin **which offers such deep misery and so little pleasure.**

The Parable of the Envious Son

Jesus’ most famous parable in Luke 14. 11–32 may give us a clue. It is commonly titled “The Parable of the *Prodigal* Son,” a title which focuses primarily on the

deadly sin of Greed (represented by the greedy or prodigal younger son) rather than the sin of Envy (represented by the envious *older son*).

There is a strange and beautiful rendition of this parable in Moscow's Museon Park of Sculptures: The prodigal son, hewn from two blocks of granite (the Greed from which he struggles to emerge), clings to his father in repentance, while the older son, representing Envy, is barely visible behind the father's right shoulder...

Yet this older son — who only appears at the end of the parable — is **filled with resentment and misery** because his father welcomed back his wasteful younger son by slaughtering the delicious “fatted calf.” But note this: he is not miserable because he didn't *get* a fatted calf; he is miserable because his younger brother *did*. And not even a thousand fatted calves would make him happy now. **He does not want just a fatted calf — he wants his younger brother to not have a fatted calf.** And the last words we hear from him is this bitter outburst to his father: “When this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!”

The father *tries* to give the story a happy ending by reminding the older son that he already owns *all* his fatted calves. But there is no response from his son. The parable just ends. Yet this is clearly a parable of two deadly sins: **the Greed of the younger, and the Envy of the older.** And Jesus make it clear that **Envy is the worst. Not only is the envious brother**

more miserable than the greedy brother, but he remains unreconciled to his father. And the bitterness of his Envy appears to have a tragic ending.

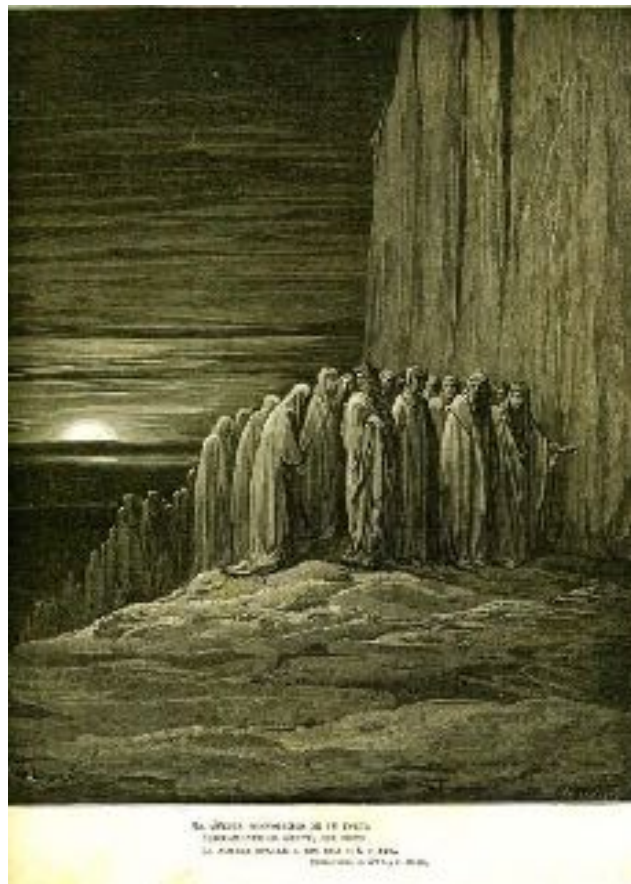
Greed may have led the younger son to a humiliating end in a pigsty — but his misery is short. And he is able to see his sin far more clearly than the envious brother can, and his repentance is therefore rapid. **Envy, on the other hand, sustains the older son's *dignity* over a long and miserable time-period.**

Greed is like a disease which spreads rapidly — causing us to cry out for mercy and find healing. **Envy is more like a cancer which spreads slower and insidiously *inside* the body — protecting our dignity while it ravages our joy.** Greed can be shared amongst friends; Envy must always be hidden — it is not a sin one *wants* to share with others. Greed simply wants more “stuff”; **Envy wants others to have *less* stuff.**

Even at its most “noble,” **Envy wants — no demands — that *others* are given their just punishment.** *Which is why the Father's mercy to the greedy younger brother drives the older brother insane. His yearning for justice has been denied.* And perhaps that is *why we cling so tenaciously to this miserable sin: we, too, yearn for justice.* But Jesus' parable subverts our yearning for justice and fairness by telling a story in which the “**bad**” younger son receives mercy, and the “**good**” older son,

who continued working faithfully in his father's fields, is denied the justice he yearns for.

We can only imagine the offense this parable must have triggered amongst the stable farming community Jesus was talking to: the bad son who wasted his father's money is celebrated! And the faithful older son who woke up early every morning and worked till sundown every night receives nothing. **Where is the justice in this story? There is none.**



Gustave Dore: The Envious, blinded, lean on each other for support on the 4th Terrace of Mt. Purgatory (Wikipedia Commons).

And that is Jesus' point. In the Kingdom of Heaven there is no justice. Which is why the envious so often refuse God's invitation to Heaven. Envy demands justice (not mercy). We want to *deserve* our place in Heaven. We want to *work* for our reward. We don't want handouts! And Heaven would therefore be a very offensive place for the envious: a place filled with lazy, greedy, smelly losers — all of whom have repented. And none of which deserve Heaven.

In *How Dante can Change your Life*, Rod Dreher describes how reading this parable in the middle of a family crisis helped him to finally recognize the misery which this little virus of Envy had been inflicting on him and his family for so long: this parable, he said, described his own family.

His dad had always seen him as “the prodigal son” who abandoned the family and wasted his talents in the secular world of New York. But Dreher, on the other hand, began to recognize his father as a cruel *subversion* of the merciful father in Jesus' parable. Whereas the father in the parable embraced his son when he returned, *his* father had never embraced him when he gave up a lucrative job in New York, and returned to be his family in the South. And this had created a deep resentment within Dreher. Envy had infected him. And he began to realize that dwelling on “the pain, the rejection, and the sense of injustice” would keep him stuck in illness and misery for as long as he nursed this wretched little virus.

On Dante’s Mt. *Purgatory*, the envious have their eyes sewn shut with wire. It sounds like a terrible punishment, but these sinners choose this pain because they understand that Envy is caused by a distorted way of *seeing* (the root word for envy is the Latin word *videre*, to see). And the only cure is in blinding their bent vision.

As blinded climbers, the envious are therefore forced to really “see” their fellow climbers for the first time — to lean upon each other for survival without the ability to pre-judge, and therefore distort each other. All become equal on this blind and humbling mountain, where neither color nor class, rich nor poor, ugly nor beautiful, make any difference. It is really hard to see each other clearly in Earth’s murky spiritual atmosphere. And things become much clearer and sharper at higher altitudes on Dante’s Mt. Purgatory.

Even Bertrand Russell suggests a cure for the misery of Envy: “Whoever wishes to increase human happiness,” he argues, “must wish to increase admiration.”—the exact opposite posture of Envy, and very difficult with our bent vision.



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ago and has been teaching at Sterling College ever since. He wrote his dissertation on C. S. Lewis's early pre-Christian writings, specifically *Dymer* and *Spirits in Bondage*.