

II. ENVY & ADMIRATION

As we continue climbing Mount Purgatory, we come to the second level, where Envy, the daughter of Pride, is purged. Envy is pleasure in the sorrow of another and resentment over their happiness or success. It is like all the deadly sins, a "capital" or "head" sin because it is a fountain from which other evil acts flow; acts such as theft, betrayal, and even murder. Both Scripture, and the great literature of the world often speak to us of the deadly effects of envy. They remind us that our true happiness is found by joining our lives in love with God and others, who also have been loved into being by God.

QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. Read Isaiah 26:12 and Philippians 2:12-13. Who should receive the glory for every good thing we do? How does Paul understand the way in which we should view our accomplishments in light of our relationship to God?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-31. How does Paul say that we are to understand our relationship to one another and the relative importance of our contributions?
3. Read Galatians 5:14-26. What is the source of what Paul sees: envy, competition, pride, self-conceit, vying for position and status, factionalism, drunkenness, and other such sins? What is the result of giving in to these sins? What does Paul tell us is the only way to defeat these sins? How do we put that into practice?
4. Read CCC 2538-2540. How does the tenth commandment illuminate the sin of envy in the heart? What does St. John Chrysostom prescribe as the best medicine for killing the sin of envy?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Have you ever felt resentment over somebody's success or joy over his or her failure? If so, do you still struggle with it, or did you defeat that in your heart? How?
2. Why is envy the daughter of pride and not, say, avarice or gluttony?
3. Dante's penance for the envious is that they have their eyes sewn shut as medieval falconers would sew shut the eyes of their falcons. How is this both a punishment and a medicine for the envious? What does this tell us about the sin of envy?
4. Have you ever had a hero or someone you deeply admired? Who was it and why did you admire him or her so much? If you could meet him or her, what would you say? Can you contrast the admiration you have had for a hero with an experience of envy you have had for a competitor?
5. Can you think of one person in your life who you need to "go out of your way to praise? Have you ever, like John the Baptist, said of another you were tempted to envy, "He must increase, and I must decrease?" Have you ever had a sense of contentment in knowing where you begin and where you end without having to compare yourself to others?