

I. Homily – 26th Sunday in Ordinary time – Envy¹

II. Those cautioning Moses and our Lord against those prophesying or casting out demons may be expressing a genuine religious concern or they may be demonstrating envy.

A. In any event, whether it is Moses in our first reading or Jesus in our gospel reading, they both exhort their disciples to remain calm and realize that one who does the good is not contrary to our Lord's mission as long as they are not intentionally or unintentionally undermining his mission.

B. This, however, is an opportunity for us to take a look at the sin of envy or, as it is sometime referred, jealousy.

III. What is envy?

A. The dictionary definition of envy is "a feeling of discontent or covetousness with regard to another's advantages, success, possessions, etc."

1. St. Thomas Aquinas adds that it is actually a feeling of sorrow at someone else's good.

2. Envy is one of the seven deadly sins and, therefore, can be a sin which completely cuts us off from our relationship with God.

3. Sometimes we may reduce serious sin to simply two things: murder and infidelity in marriage.

4. However, there are a number of things which can cut us off from God and envy can be one of them.

B. The challenge of envy is that it can sometimes look like a good thing.

¹ Source Dr. Peter Kreeft, Pope Benedict, St. Thomas Aquinas, Pope John Paul II.

1. After all, because envy is wanting that which another has or thinking oneself entitled to what another has, it can look a lot like what we call aspiration.
2. Aspiration is where we recognize the good in another and want to emulate the good qualities of this person.
3. It is good that we want to emulate the charity of Jesus Christ or the wisdom of Socrates or the courage of a war hero. This is good; however, sometimes envy can disguise itself in sheep's clothing.

C. The reality is that envy in fact destroys the good.

1. First, envy whispers in our ear and lies to us. Envy makes statements like: "This is not fair." "Why does that person get this and I only get that." "I should have this or that." "I am just as good as you."
2. Second, Envy takes away our joy. Envy is the only one of the deadly sins which never gives us any pleasure, even apparent pleasure. It eats away at us and makes us miserable.
3. The envious or jealous person is one who makes themselves miserable, because they are always defining their good by what other people have...they resent the good of another...instead of striving to achieve the good for good sake, they strive to achieve the good so that they can be above another...
4. In fact, a jealous or envious person may even sacrifice what is objectively good simply in order that the other does not get ahead of them...

IV. What is the solution to envy?

A. The blue print which Christ gives us of the Christian life is "The Beatitudes."

1. The Beatitude which most clearly teaches us to counter envy is, in fact, Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted."
2. Have you ever thought about this beatitude?
3. What does it mean?
4. How can our Lord want us to mourn? Doesn't he want us to rejoice?
5. How does this counter envy?

B. There are levels of mourning aren't there?

1. First, there is normal human suffering from the headache to dying. This, we will all undergo.
2. Second, there is the greatest possible suffering and it is the suffering that is only felt by a person who has loved.
3. Both of these two ways teach us that the purpose of this life is not to be comfortable but to love. They teach us that what we are ultimately seeking in this life is not a superficial feeling of happiness but blessedness...what we are ultimately seeking is eternal joy and this comes to us when we give entirely of ourselves to another...when we truly and actually love another.

C. Strangely, the reality is that the more one loves the more one will suffer.

1. Think for a moment if you have lost or known someone who has lost someone that they have loved.
 - a) *I mean truly loved...a husband or wife, son or daughter or very dear friend.*
 - b) *They suffer greatly at this loss.*
2. Just as love brings the greatest joy. It also brings the greatest sorrow and anyone who has loved would not trade that sorrow for having never loved.

D. How does mourning then, counter envy?...true mourning is proof that we have truly loved.

1. Love counters envy, because it is in love that we become the other.
2. But, we become the other, not by destroying or coveting the other. Dr. Kreeft explains: "...we slough off our skin like a snake. Underneath that hard, protective coat of otherness and ego, there is new flesh, incomparably more sensitive than the outer skin."
3. We hear similar words when St. Paul describes the relationship of husband and wife. He writes, "The two become one flesh."
4. Kreeft continues: "We appropriately cover and protect these privy parts of our soul, just as we do to the corresponding parts of the body. But when we love, we expose them to pleasures or pains beyond our imagining."

5. You see. Envy is all about myself and mixed up priorities and lies about what will really make us happy. Those who mourn are those who have loved and those who have truly loved have given themselves completely to another. It is no longer about their own happiness but the other's blessedness.

E. When we look at the reality that mourning and loving are closely tied together in this side of life, we may wonder how we get there...how can this be?

1. That is, until we realize the one who has suffered more than any other...because he has loved more than any other...

2. Therefore, we can take this one step further. The one who has loved infinitely, has also suffered infinitely.

3. Jesus Christ loved us completely and so there is no one who has suffered more.

4. But, he suffered on the cross so that we might be able to love completely and therefore experience true, deep and lasting joy.

V. Where do we get this spiritual strength to love so deeply that we mourn and therefore extricate from our lives any semblance of envy?

A. It happens only in being incorporated into the divine life of the one who is pure love and has done it perfectly and completely.

B. It happens by being incorporated into the divine life of Jesus Christ.

C. How do we incorporate ourselves into Jesus Christ?

1. Here in the sacraments...

2. In Baptism...

3. In the forgiveness of sins in Reconciliation...

4. In receiving his body and blood in the Eucharist...

5. In the complete self giving of husband and wife in the sacrament of marriage...

D. These combat envy, because they are never diminished. They are infinite...just as Christ is.

E. But, after having been incorporated into Christ, we still have our free will...we are made capable of such a love in these sacraments but then we must make the decision that the objective and ultimate good is the one that is most important...we must choose to be selfless...