

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Envy is often considered merely as a mild form of jealousy. However, the French philosopher Rene Girard has pointed out how a basic form of envy is at the root of all our relationships both personal and cultural. From our earliest days we look on others and learn about life by imitating them. This imitation is how we learn life's rules, and there is nothing wrong with it, but it becomes distorted when that natural instinct to imitate turns into envy.

At that point we no longer simply imitate the other person, we start to desire what they have and who they are. This leads to rivalry in which our imitation of them becomes a desire to take over from them, and this envy, if it is left to grow in our hearts soon turns into resentment against the other person. When this happens on a group level all sorts of tribal rivalries develop.

Envy, therefore, leads to the sixth of the sins on our list: wrath. Wrath is not just normal impatience or anger. Wrath is the seething rage that develops from envy and resentment. Wrath wants to do away with the other person. For most people this will not end in actual bloodshed, but this wrath shows itself in other forms of "murder". Deciding to cut someone off, to divorce a spouse, to eliminate someone from your life, to never speak to them again, to refuse to forgive—these are all the ways in which wrath can be expressed.

The vice of envy is countered by the virtue of gratitude, and the vice of wrath, by the virtue of forgiveness. Gratitude and forgiveness are at the heart of the Lord's prayer. Therefore, the way to cultivate gratitude and forgiveness is to increase your life of prayer—both in quantity and quality.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker