

Pastoral Message from Fr. George for May 26, 2021

Christ is risen! At our Adult Religious Education Class this past Sunday, we reflected on how everyday photos can remind us of spiritual opportunities. Below, I share a photo that reminded me of an Old Testament crime that informs us today...



These days, we are awash with the beauty of God's creation... the colorful petals from Presbytera Marinda's rose bush above affirm nature's beauty. That rose is appropriately named "Joseph's Coat" for the garment of many colors that the Old Testament Patriarch Jacob (*also called Israel*) owned and gave as a gift to his son. As a result, Joseph was **envied** by his brothers, who saw the special coat as an indication that their brother, Joseph, would assume family leadership. They plotted to kill him. With that aim thwarted, they sold him into slavery for 20 pieces of silver. In turn, they told their father that Joseph had been devoured by wild animals.

What can we say about envy?

Envy is the hatred of the other person for having what we want but cannot have. Envy sees the other person's good as a harm to us. Pride tells us we deserve it, but we know that we cannot have it. Envy, as it poisons the soul, urges us to kill and destroy what is good so that we are not alone in our weakness. Envy wants to exalt its low estate by bringing all others under it in death. After all, the weak man is still stronger than the dead man.

While this sounds extreme (not all the envious commit murders), Envy commits a thousand small murders a day. It spins gossip about others to murder the reputation of someone else. It hates and tries to convert others to that hatred. It will lead us to harm the subject of our Envy when we have a chance by any means our cowardice will permit.

Envy is the coward's passion. It sulks and whines about 'injustices' and 'unfairness,' but ultimately never does anything about it except complain. When Envy starts a 'crusade,' it is to bring others down

rather than build anything up. It has no hope in the face of 'no' other than the destruction of everything outside of it.

(reprinted from <https://orthodoxyandrecovery.blogspot.com>)

Indeed, the beautiful roses above can remind us of the treachery and envy that Joseph's brothers had for their young brother. **What about us?** Can we use this moment as an opportunity to assess whether we harbor feelings of envy with others, whether it be with our family, friends, or co-workers? If so, the Apostle James helps us reflect on how to overcome these temptations in his letter (James 3:13-18):

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

My brothers and sister in Christ, may we sow “a harvest of righteousness in peace” by making peace between those we resent and keep at a distance from us. St. Paul guides us further in Galatians 5:19-26:

¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning

you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²**By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,** ²³**gentleness, and self-control.** There is no law against such things. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. ²⁶**Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.**

MY HAPPY PLACE

" A Tree is known by its fruit; a man by his deeds. A good deed is never lost; he who sows courtesy reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness gathers love".

- Saint Basil



Amen!