CHAPTER 3 OF 11 · PREACHED SEPTEMBER 20, 2026 · 25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Envy

Isaiah 55:6-9 · Psalm 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18 · Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a · Matthew 20:1-16a (Workers in the Vineyard)



I The Teaching

In the Readings: A Fair Wage, an Unfair Feeling

- A landowner pays every worker the same wage, from the dawn crew to the one hired at 5 p.m.

> *"Are you envious because I am generous?" (Matthew 20:15)*

- The literal idiom is closer to "is your eye evil"; the ancient shorthand for envy itself. Nobody in the parable is shorted anything; the grief is purely comparative

Nature

> *"Envy is sorrow for another's good." (Aquinas, quoting St. John DamasceneTanquerey: envy is "a tendency to be saddened by another's good as if that good constituted an affront to our own superiority"; it "proceeds from pride, which can bear neither superior nor rival.")*

- Tanquerey draws two useful distinctions: envy grieves at another's good; jealousy fears losing one's own good to another; emulation (a virtue) imitates and even seeks to surpass another's good qualities, but by fair means and for a worthy end

Daughter Vices

Aquinas (Summa II-II, Q. 36, a. 4) traces envy's daughters as a sequence: the stages envy moves through as it tries to bring another person down.

- **Tale-bearing (whispering):** The first move, made in secret: quietly lowering someone's standing behind their back, often sowing discord between them and others.
- **Detraction:** The same move made openly: publicizing or emphasizing another's faults to diminish how others regard them.
- **Joy at another's misfortune:** If the effort succeeds: a secret satisfaction when the rival stumbles or is taken down a peg.
- **Grief at another's prosperity:** If the effort fails: a deepened sadness as the rival keeps flourishing anyway.
- **Hatred:** The end of the road: sorrow at another's good, left to fester, turns into ill will toward the person himself, wishing him evil outright.

In the Readings

- Grief at another's prosperity is, almost word for word, what the all-day laborers do.

- Their grumbling against the landowner is detraction in its infancy: the complaint that aims to make someone else's good look like an injustice.

Effects

- Tanquerey: envy stirs hatred toward those we envy; it sows discord even within families (he points to Joseph and his brothers); it drives an immoderate, competitive scramble for riches and honors just to surpass a rival; and it destroys the envious person's own peace of soul, since the rival is rarely, if ever, fully "overcome"
- Envy almost always arrives wearing the mask of justice: "It's not fair."

Remedies

- Tanquerey's negative remedy: scorn the first stirrings of envy as something vile, the way one would a snake; distract the mind; remind yourself that another's good in no way subtracts from your own
- His positive remedy draws on our incorporation into one Body: "instead of being saddened at the superiority of our brethren we must rejoice… since their superiority contributes to the common good and to our own particular welfare" (cf. Romans 12:15)
- Cultivate emulation instead: imitating and even trying to surpass another's virtue, but for the glory of God and the good of others rather than to defeat a rival

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- Not judging others (The Way 442, 451, 454; Furrow 365); detraction's cure begins in the mind before it reaches the mouth.
- The Communion of Saints: the good deeds of others have incalculable repercussions that reach us too (The Way 755; Forge 630, 640); the same Body-of-Christ remedy Tanquerey gives, from another angle.
- Universal charity, and refusing "collective egoism" as a family, clique, or nation (Furrow 303, 315); envy between groups, not just between persons.

Taking It Home

- Isaiah: "my thoughts are not your thoughts"; envy assumes a fixed pie; grace doesn't work by that arithmetic
- God's generosity to someone else was never a subtraction from you

II Examination of Conscience

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit, help me to see my sins clearly, to be truly sorry for them, and to trust in your mercy. Amen.

How to read the ◆ GRAVE MATTER tag

A question with this tag concerns a serious matter. A sin is mortal only when grave matter is chosen with full knowledge and deliberate consent (Catechism 1857), and fear, habit or other factors can lessen responsibility. If you are unsure about anything, bring it to Confession and ask the priest.

Envy itself

- ☐ Has someone else's good news made me sad, as if it took something from me?
- ☐ Do I compare my life, my family, my looks or my success with others?
- ☐ Have I felt that God has been more generous to others than to me?
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I deliberately wished serious harm to someone because of what they have? (CCC 2539)
- ☐ Have I been unable to praise someone sincerely?

Tale-bearing: lowering them in secret

- ☐ Have I quietly passed along things that make someone look worse?
- ☐ Have I tried to stir up others against someone I envy?

Detraction: running them down openly

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I revealed someone's hidden faults or sins without a real need, seriously damaging their reputation? (CCC 2477)
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I said things about someone that I knew were false? (calumny, CCC 2477)
- ☐ Have I made someone's achievement sound unfair or undeserved ("It's not fair," "they just got lucky")?

Joy at their misfortune

- ☐ Have I felt satisfaction when someone I envy stumbled, failed or was embarrassed?
- ☐ Have I enjoyed hearing bad news about a rival?

Grief at their prosperity

- ☐ Do I grow sadder as others keep flourishing?
- ☐ Have I avoided people, unfollowed them or skipped celebrations because their happiness hurt?

Hatred: the end of the road

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I let envy harden into ill will, wishing someone evil? (CCC 2303)

What envy has done

- [ ] Has envy caused division in my family, among friends, or in the parish?
- [ ] Have I pushed myself into a competitive scramble for money, status or attention just to keep pace with others?
- [ ] Has comparing robbed me of peace and gratitude?

The remedies: have I tried?

- [ ] When envy stirs, do I reject it right away instead of feeding it?
- [ ] Do I remember that another person's good takes nothing from mine?
- [ ] Do I pray for the people I envy, asking God to bless them even more?
- [ ] Have I congratulated someone sincerely, out loud?
- [ ] Do I let others' virtues inspire me to grow (emulation) rather than make me resentful?
- [ ] Do I thank God each day for the gifts He has given me?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Do I compare my spouse or my marriage with others?
- [ ] Do I compete with my spouse instead of rejoicing in his or her gifts?

Parents

- [ ] Do I compare my children with one another, or with other people's children?
- [ ] Do I push my children to succeed so I can look good?

Single adults

- [ ] Have I resented friends who married, had children, or seem to have the life I wanted?

Young people

- [ ] Do I compare myself with others on social media?
- [ ] Have I talked behind someone's back because I was jealous of them?

At work

- [ ] Have I undermined a coworker's success, or taken credit for their work?
- [ ] Have I resented someone's promotion and let it sour my work?

Beneath the surface

These are not accusations but invitations to let Christ heal what lies underneath.

- [ ] Was there a time I was passed over, left out or measured and found lacking, that still shapes how I see others?
- [ ] Do I believe the lie that my worth depends on how I measure against others?
- [ ] Do I believe there is only so much of God's love to go around?
- [ ] Can I hear God say to me, "I have called you by name: you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1)?

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because of Thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.

III Meditation: The Five O'Clock Workers

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 20:1-16a

Find a few quiet minutes. Take a slow breath and let your shoulders drop.

The Lord is here with you, and He sees you as you are. There is nothing you have to prove to Him.

When you are ready, picture a late afternoon in a small town square, the heat starting to break. Some men are still standing around. No one has hired them all day.

Stand with them for a moment. You know that feeling: the one not picked for the team, passed over for the promotion, still waiting while everyone else seems to have their life figured out. Let yourself feel it.

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Now the landowner comes back. It's five o'clock. There's barely an hour of work left, and he still comes looking. "Why do you stand here idle all day?" "Because no one has hired us." He says, "You too go into my vineyard." He keeps coming back for the ones left standing.

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Now move to the other side of the line, with the workers who started at dawn. Watch the five o'clock men receive a full day's wage. Feel what rises in you. Be honest. Is it joy for them? Or is it "That's not fair"?

Think of the last time someone else's good news stung. A friend's new house on the lake. A neighbor's son who made varsity when yours didn't. A coworker who got the credit. Name it before God, without excuses.

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Hear the landowner say to you, kindly: "Are you envious because I am generous?" Then hear the deeper truth underneath it. His generosity to them was never taken from you. You received your full wage too. Ask Him to show you what He has given you that you have stopped seeing.

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Now do something hard. Bring to mind the person you envy, and ask God to bless them even more than they already are. Say their name. Ask Him to give them joy, peace and every good thing. Notice what happens in your heart as you pray.

Rest a moment in the Lord's words from Isaiah: "My thoughts are not your thoughts." His love is not a fixed pie. There is more than enough for you.

How to Use This Guide

The Teaching

Each chapter begins with the outline of that Sunday's homily: the readings, what the sin is, the sins it gives rise to (its "daughters"), what it does to us, and its remedies. Read it slowly. Look up the references that catch your attention.

Examination of Conscience

Use it before Confession, or as a nightly examen. You don't have to answer every question at once; let the Holy Spirit show you what matters. Each examination ends with questions for particular states of life and a few questions about the wounds beneath our sins.

Meditation

A guided prayer with that Sunday's Gospel. Find a quiet place and read it slowly. Where you see a pause, stop and stay with the Lord for a while.

Questions tagged ◆ GRAVE MATTER concern serious matters. For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must all be present together: grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent (Catechism 1857). Fear, habit, ignorance, immaturity and other factors can lessen responsibility (Catechism 1735, 2352). The tag does not mean you have committed a mortal sin. It means the question deserves special care.

Mortal sins should be confessed, in kind and number as best you can recall, before receiving Holy Communion (Catechism 1385, 1456-1457). If you are unsure about anything, bring it to Confession and ask the priest. That is why he is there.

Come to Confession

Saturday	7:30 AM and 3:30 PM
Sunday	7:30 AM, 10:00 AM, 1:00 PM (Spanish) and 5:00 PM
Monday–Friday	5:30 AM and 8:15 AM
Wednesday	also 5:00 PM

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