

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

Life in Christ – Part 3: Wrath – Can You Feel It?

Last week, we considered the sin of Envy, which desires the goods or blessings of another. This week, we consider one of its corollaries, Wrath, which is the desiring of evil for another. We feel Wrath when we wish harm on another or even consider harming another.

The more common term for Wrath is anger. If we are asked if we've experienced Wrath, many of us would reply negatively, but most of us can say that we have been angry. While there is justified, or justifiable, anger, the sin of anger, or Wrath, is in how it plays out. For example, if we are angry that babies are being killed, that would be justified anger. However, if that anger caused us to kill the doctor performing abortions, that would be the sin of murder that emanates from the sin of Wrath. In fact, even wishing that harm come upon that doctor would come from the sin of Wrath.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus decries anger by saying, "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment." [MT 5:21-22] From this teaching of Jesus, we can see that He considers angry thoughts as evil, not just the actions that result from those thoughts.

How do we counter the effects of anger? We can turn back to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount for the answer: "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust." [MT 5:44-45]

Most of us do not feel anger to the point of murder, but perhaps understanding that the sin of Wrath can lead us to either think or act unlovingly toward another, should encourage us to remove this sin from our lives. Jesus' advice to pray for those who anger us can really help us. Of course, when Jesus commands us to pray for them, he is not asking us to pray that they'll go away. Instead, prayer opens up our hearts to our enemies, so that over time we may be able to love them as our brothers and sisters. We may also pray that they too will have a change of heart, thus imploring the help of God, who is the only one who can change someone's heart.

Next week, we will look at the Capital Sin of Avarice, or greed, another sin that may spring from Envy.

