



## Overcoming Envy During Great Lent

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

The sin with which man battles for his salvation is revealed in all its essence through the vice called pride. The proud person places only himself at the center of life, relegating all others to the periphery. The proud person's life stance entails numerous dangerous consequences, one of which is the vice of envy.

Reflecting on the meaning of envy, St. Basil the Great put it very aptly: "Envy is pain for the success of one's neighbor." The proud person is unable to come to terms with the fact that someone else is smarter, prettier, wealthier, or more successful. After all, if the proud person considers himself to be the center of the universe, then who can get in the way of him occupying this place? The appearance of anyone who seems more successful or important elicits profound inner pain in the prideful person.

Envy manifests all the absurdity of pride. Contemplating envy, St. Tikhon of Zadonsk spoke these remarkable words: "All the other vices and passions at least provide some sham pleasure, while the envious person sins and suffers." Indeed, if the other vices are accompanied by at least a sham pleasure, envy is painful – and always only painful – and never even falsely pleasurable. If one does not do battle with the feeling of envy, it can become so enslaving that one becomes aggressive and dangerous to others. After all, it was no accident that the cause of the first murder, performed at the dawn of human history by Cain against his brother Abel, was envy. The envious person becomes aggressive and dangerous to others. And the more carefully he conceals this inner flame of envy in his heart, the more dangerous he becomes.



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So how should one do battle with this challenge? How should one do battle with this vice? The same Tikhon of Zadonsk said: “Pride is the mother of envy. Slay the mother and the daughter will perish.” In order to overcome the feeling of envy, one must do battle with pride. But inasmuch as pride wholly manifests the very nature of sin, doing battle with vice is very difficult, and one can conquer pride only by the power of God. Therefore prayer, participation in the Mysteries of the Church, continual reflection on one’s life, on the movements of one’s soul, and on one’s thoughts, and a rigorous judgment of oneself can help a person overcome pride.

But there are also two more remarkable means.

The first is the recognition of the fact that the Lord has bestowed unique qualities upon each person and



that no two people are absolutely alike. Each person is unique and has his own value before God. No matter how weak, ill, or unfortunate someone may seem, he has value in God's eyes. Recognition of this fact helps one refrain from envy. It is a big world, and each person has his place in it. Understanding everyone's uniqueness and the wisdom of the Divine plan helps us to overcome the feeling on envy.

There is yet another very important means: good deeds. When we perform a good deed for someone, he ceases to be distant from us and becomes a loved one. We do not envy those for whom we perform good deeds. If there is anyone who doubts this, let him try to perform a good deed for someone whom they envy, and the envy will gradually give way because this person will become a loved one to him.

We should remember that we ourselves very often provoke the feeling of envy in those around us. Sometimes vexing an envious person, provoking him to a feeling of envy, can cause pleasure. For example, when acquiring beautiful new clothes, some people may think first of all about how these clothes will cause their acquaintances, or even their family and loved ones, to become envious. Envy is a dangerous and aggressive vice. If we ourselves do not wish to be stung by envy, then we should not stir up envy in others. Many ills in this world have been committed, and continue to be committed, because of envy.

The time of Great Lent is a time to do battle with the vices: both with pride and with envy. Going to God's church, listening to the marvelous words of prayer and hymnody, turning with fervent prayer to the Lord for help with our spiritual lives, let us ask that He help us uproot from our hearts both pride and envy. By shaking off such vices, we will feel an extraordinary lightness of life and joy in existence. May the Lord help us in this holy and salutary Forty Day Fast gradually but steadily to ascend from strength to strength in our movement towards meeting the Lord and Savior. Amen.

*Originally delivered following Great Compline on Clean Monday, 2010, in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow.*

*Translated from [Russian](#).*

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