

Commentary

Today we are going to discuss ANGER...we will remember recent times of anger and examine if they were just feeling or if they cascaded into sin...and we will examine God's solution to our sin of anger.

1. Briefly share a time within the last few weeks when you were angry. What caused it and how did you feel? Very brief, please....focus on how you felt.

Sirach 27:30-28:5 *Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight. The vengeful will suffer the LORD'S vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail. Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.*

- *Should a man nourish anger against his fellows and expect healing from the LORD?*
- *Should a man refuse mercy to his fellows, yet seek pardon for his own sins?*
- *If he who is but flesh cherishes wrath, who will forgive his sins?*

SIR 28:6-8 *Remember your last days and set enmity aside; remember death and decay, and cease from sin! Remember the commandments and do not be angry with your neighbor; remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook faults. Avoid strife and your sins will be fewer, for the hot-tempered kindle strife...*

When I was in 5th grade my best friend was Randy. He was two years older and a head taller than me but I liked hanging around with that older kid. One Fall day a group of us were playing football in a neighbor's yard and somehow an argument started. The next thing I remember was Randy having me pinned down, kneeling on my shoulders. As I struggled to get free he added insult to injury by stuffing my shirt, pants and mouth with grass clippings. Allergic as I was with hay fever, what hurt was being totally humiliated in front of the other kids. I went home hopping mad and I didn't get over it for a long time. That was the last time I spoke to Randy...I refused to forgive him...I hated that kid with a passion for years to come. I remember hearing in Church that if I loved Jesus I had to love my neighbors as myself. I am sure I heard the verses to forgive our brother from our hearts. I could forgive my sisters for teasing me or my parents for leaning on me, but I refused to forgive Randy...I hated that kid. I fully understand the Scripture reading today as it says, "Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight." I hugged that hate for years until finally my pride softened...I had to give up hating and forgive Randy in my heart...but, you know something, it was a shame that I never did settle it with him face to face.

So when does anger become sin? I believe we need to evaluate the attitudes behind the feelings and the behavior that follows. With Randy, the anger triggered my pride...a pride that was

humiliated in front of the other kids...my defenses kicked in...I wanted revenge, but couldn't have it because he was much bigger than me. If I went back he would have heaped on more humiliation...I eliminated Randy from my life, but just driving by his house and my anger would boil...it lasted for years...my heart became hard because I wouldn't let it go...for a while I knew I was separated from God's love being so angry...it wasn't right, but my anger justified it...for a while.

The Catholic Encyclopedia says anger is the desire of vengeance. Its ethical rating depends upon the QUALITY of the vengeance and the QUANTITY of the passion. When these are in reasonable balance, anger is not a sin. Anger can even be a praiseworthy thing and justifiable.

Anger becomes sinful when:

- it is sought to wreak vengeance upon one who has not deserved it, or
- to a greater extent than it has been deserved, or
- in conflict with the dispositions of law, or
- from an improper motive.

Anger becomes a mortal sin when it is opposed to justice and charity. Anger is sinful when there is an undue vehemence in the passion itself, whether inwardly or outwardly. Ordinarily anger is a venial sin unless the excess be so great as to seriously go counter to the love of God or of a neighbor.

2. What does it mean to balance the QUALITY of the vengeance and the QUANTITY of the passion?

Let's go back to that time in your life when you were angry.

3. What attitudes were behind your anger...did it cascade into sin? Or merely stay as an angry feeling?

The response to the sin of anger in the Scripture today calls us to see the two faces of forgiveness.

4. What are they?: forgiving others as well as being forgiven. When we pray, God's grace will forgive our sins in loving mercy.

You no doubt can recall times when you needed to seek forgiveness. Hopefully those times were for mostly unintentional acts, but when people react to us in anger we need to carefully ask if we did something sinful to set them off. We need to return a friendly, loving response seeking forgiveness. That can be difficult because we so easily respond to anger with anger. No less

passionately, however, we need to first take a walk in their shoes...to see things from their perspective.

The Catechism^{CCC976} reminds us that the Creed we say every Sunday includes the phrase, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins”. This associates our faith in the forgiveness of sin with faith in the Holy Spirit, in the Church and in the communion of Saints. Christ gave the apostles the Holy Spirit with the command, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven...” We truly have the means to facilitate forgiveness.

Did you seek forgiveness in your recent incidence of anger? What did you or should you do about it?

Handout

Briefly share a time within the last few weeks when you were angry. What caused it and how did you feel? Very brief, please....focus on how you felt.

Sirach 27:30-28:8

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1. Let's go back to that time in your life when you were angry. What attitudes were behind the anger...did it cascade into sin? Or merely stay as an angry feeling?
2. What does it mean to balance the QUALITY of the vengeance and the QUANTITY of the passion?
3. See the two faces of forgiveness. What are they?:
4. Did you give or seek forgiveness in your recent incidence of anger? What did you or should you do about it?

Sirach 27:30-28:8

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