**AVARICE**

**Avarice** - or greed - is closely related to several of the other Seven Deadly Sins, since - once again - the focus is on self. One of the real problems with greed is that it elevates what “I want” above what others actually need. It also implies that everyone else exists to meet my wants and that my wants and perceived needs are more important than those of others.

Greediness is not just about possessing too much, it is also about making demands on others as we “collect their gift of time” or “acquire new people.” Years ago, a politician told me that one of the most difficult things he had to do was to meet his constituents needs constantly and if he ever said, “But look at what I have done for you already over the years” only to be asked, “But what have you done for me lately?” This type of greediness is more problematic than simply acquiring what we really don’t need, because it means that we collect people to take care of our wants and needs without taking their circumstances into account.

One of the most tragic things I have witnessed is when I see priests taking advantage of their people by wanting more for themselves without regard for the sacrificial lives that many of their parishioners live in order to be generous to the work of the Lord. Priests should accept all gifts with gratitude, but at the same time expect nothing. I was once told by a man years ago that the reason he gave little to the work of the church was because he gave his talent of grass cutting as a gift. Sadly, he had never learned the significance of giving his Time, Talent, and Treasure. He greedily held on to what he had and had forgotten that everything he had was from God, and that what God had given to him was to be shared - not hoarded. Talents are like that. One broken hand could end a violinist’s career. One cyst or nodule on vocal chords could end a singer’s ability to sing. We need to be grateful every day for what we have, share what we have with others, and remember that “All things come of Thee, O Lord, and of Thine own have we given Thee.”

There is a story that one of the ways to capture a monkey is to carve a hole at the base of a tree in the trunk, with the hole the size of the monkey’s open hand. Food that the monkey likes is placed in the tree trunk and the monkey grabs the food in his hand making a fist. Since the monkey insists on holding on to what he has in his fist his hand cannot slip out of the tree trunk. In his unwillingness to open his hand he loses his freedom as he is captured with a fist full of what he had determined he needed and wanted. As the old saying goes: “Let go and let God.” Sometimes we simply hold onto too much and we lose our freedom.