

You might know avarice by its other name: greed [covetousness], the excessive desire for riches and possessions. There's nothing wrong with private property or wealth in itself; in fact, according to the Bible, it's not money that's the root of all evil, but the inordinate love of it: thinking that having more money, or more of anything for that matter, will fulfill you or make you happy outside of God. The anecdote virtue is generosity.

Strong desire to have that which belongs to another. It is considered to be a very grievous offense in Scripture. The tenth commandment forbids coveting anything that belongs to a neighbor, including his house, his wife, his servants, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to him (Exod 20:17). Jesus listed covetousness or greed along with many of the sins from within, including adultery, theft, and murder, which make a person unclean (Mr 7:22). Paul reminded the Ephesians that greed or covetousness is equated with immorality and impurity, so that these must be put away (5:3). A covetous or greedy person is an idolator (5:5) and covetousness is idolatry (Col 3:5). James warns that people kill and covet because they cannot have what they want (4:2).

Covetousness, therefore, is basic to the commandments against murder, adultery, stealing, and lying. Those who accept bribes are coveting, leading to murder (Eze 22:12). Coveting a neighbor's wife is a form of adultery (Exod 20:17). Achan admitted to coveting a robe and silver and gold, so he stole them, which was a sin against the Lord (Jos 7:20-22). Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, coveted the property of Naaman so much that he lied to get what he wanted from Naaman the leper (2 Ki 5:19-25) and was struck with leprosy. Proverbs warns that a covetous person brings trouble to his family (15:27). Thus covetousness is the root of all kinds of sins, so that Jesus gave the warning, "Be on your guard against all kinds of greed" (Luke 12:15).

Greed is the insatiable desire for more. St Thomas says, Man seeks, according to a certain measure, to have external riches, in so far as they are necessary for him to live in keeping with his condition of life. Wherefore it will be a sin for him to exceed this measure, by wishing to acquire or keep them immoderately. This is what is meant by covetousness, which is defined as "immoderate love of possessing." (S.T. II, IIae, q. 118 art 1) It is a deep drive in us that, no matter how

much we have, makes us think that it's not enough. We still want more, and then if we get more we want more still.

Like all of the seven deadly or capital sins, greed sees many other sins flow from it. St. Thomas lists a number of these sins, which he calls the "daughters of greed." They are: fraud, lying, perjury, dissatisfaction (restlessness), violence, and hardheartedness. (see, S.T. II, IIae, q. 118 art 8). For, as St Thomas says, greed can create in us a kind of insensibility to mercy. Since by greed we adopt a certain passion to acquire and possess, often rooted in a kind of fear. Thus we focus unreasonably on our needs and do not advert to the needs of others. Greed can therefore lead individuals and nations to a hardheartedness and cruelty or violence in order to possess what we do really even need. It can lead us to be will to lie, or commit fraud for financial gain. Finally, as Thomas notes, greed makes us restless and anxious since, whatever we have it is never enough. Further, despite its false promises, wealth does not bring peace, it increases our anxiety. As regards this, Scripture says, The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep. I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners. (Eccl 5:12-13)