

The New 7 Mortal Sins

I was interested to hear on the news that the Catholic Church has produced a list of new mortal sins to be added to the original 7 Deadly Sins from the 6th Century. These new sins were announced by Archbishop Gianfranco Girotti at the end of a training seminar for priests focusing on the importance of confession. Bishop Girotti felt that it was important that priest are made aware of “new sins which have appeared on the horizon of humanity as a corollary of the unstoppable process of globalisation.”



I'm not a Catholic but I am a Christian and I applaud Pope Benedict for his concern about his people. Pope Benedict feels that we, in modern society, are losing “the notion of sin”. I agree with him. I think that we are encouraged by many self help gurus and books to live for today, if it feels right do it, think about yourself – stuff others! We live in a society where people rip each other off as the norm, a society that is obsessed with money and has low moral standards. Our children idolize celebrities who take drugs and copious alcohol, marry and divorce within a few weeks.....
Our society is flawed.

Confession – the Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Pope is worried about his people. There has been a dramatic drop in the number of people going to confession. BBC News reports that a survey carried out **ten** years ago reported that 60% of Italian Catholics never attend confession. Confession is a vital sacrament in the Catholic Church. It is known as the Sacrament of Reconciliation. A Catholic goes to confession, confesses their sin and repents of their sin and the priest absolves them from their sin in the name of God and gives them penance. A Catholic is meant to confess regularly, at least once a year. Confession is about absolution and reconciliation with God.

What is a mortal or deadly sin?

A mortal or deadly sin is a sin which, if not confessed and absolved, puts the sinner at risk of eternal damnation in Hell, complete separation from God. Mortal sin is a deliberate, serious sin which involves the person completely turning away from God and from Love. Venial sin is a forgivable sin, a lesser sin which is not punished by eternal damnation. The new list published by the Vatican is a list of mortal sins.

The New List

The new sins putting us at risk of eternal damnation in Hell are:-

- Morally debatable experiments such as stem cell research
- Genetic manipulation and Bio-ethical violations such as birth control
- Drug trafficking and drug abuse

- Environmental pollution
- Violation of the fundamental rights of human nature
- Excessive wealth
- Inflicting poverty

The original list of Seven “Deadly” Sins:-

- Pride
- Envy
- Gluttony
- Lust
- Anger
- Greed
- Sloth

Yes, it's great that the Catholic Church wants to put a more modern spin on mortal sin and make people aware of what sin is but I'm not sure I agree with the new list. The problem with the new list is that it is open to interpretation and do people really understand it?

Morally debatable Experiments

Many people think that science is going too far but how many of us are actually involved in stem cell research? What does the Church mean? Is it just a sin to be involved in it or to agree with it or to benefit from it?

Genetic Manipulation/Bio-ethical violations

Again this needs to be clarified. Does it just mean genetic experiments? How many of us is that relevant to?

Some reports have said that this includes birth control. I do not want to start a debate about birth control but I can't find anything in the Bible about it. In Genesis 1 v28 Adam and Eve were commanded to “Be fruitful and increase in number” (NIV) but nowhere does it say that birth control is a sin. Surely if we do not use birth control we will have an overpopulated world and we are committing the mortal sin of “inflicting poverty”. I'll get off my soap box now!

Drug trafficking and abuse

Great, an easy to understand one! I agree with this. Drugs damage our society and I am glad that the Catholic Church is concerned about our drug culture. Drugs do harm and kill and they exploit people.

Environmental Pollution

I'm glad that the Catholic Church is concerned about pollution and wants people to think more about this issue but what constitutes a sin? How “green” do we have to be? Is it a mortal sin to use a plastic bag? Needs clarification don't you think?

Violation of the fundamental rights of human nature

Again this needs clarification. How many people are going to understand that? My feeling is that this covers murder, rape, pornography and pedophilia and yes, those are serious sins.

Excessive wealth

What does “excessive” mean? I do not agree with this one at all. It is not a sin to be wealthy. It is a sin to be greedy and lustful but not to possess wealth.

In the Bible Jesus tells The Parable of the talents in Matthew 25. In this parable a man entrusts his property to his 3 servants and then goes away. He gives 5 talents (a coin or weight) to the first servant, 2 talents to the second servant and one talent to the third servant. The first servant put his money to work and gained five more. Servant two put his money to work and gained 2 more. Servant three was afraid and buried his money in a hole. The master arrives home and wants to settle the accounts. He is pleased with servants one and two “You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.” but he is angry with servant three “You wicked lazy servant.....Take the talent from him”.

Wealth is not wrong in itself. God expects us to be responsible and to make wise use of the gifts that He gives us. There are many millionaires in this world who strive to make this world a better place and who give abundantly to charities.

Many people might, at this point, point out the story of the rich man in Matthew 19. Here, Jesus is approached by a rich young man who wants to know “what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”(Matthew 19v17). Jesus replies that the man should keep the commandments. “What do I still lack?”(Matthew 19v20) asks the man, explaining that he keeps the commandments. Jesus tells him to go and sell all his possessions and follow Him.

I do not think that Jesus is saying that we should all give up our possessions and that we are sinners if we are rich. He is simply pointing out that if our possessions are more important than God then we are in trouble.

Inflicting Poverty

This again needs clarification. How does Mr/Mrs Average “inflict poverty”? I can see how companies and institutions exploit the poor and can make people even poorer but what constitutes a personal sin? Is it a sin to work for a bank?

So, this new list, in my opinion, is not very useful. A Church that is trying to give people a “notion” of sin is actually going to confuse people. Why not just update the language or names of the original deadly sins? Sloth, for example, could be renamed “laziness” and explained as laziness both physically and spiritually. These seven deadly sins are still as relevant today and will still be relevant in another 100+ years. People will always be envious, proud, greedy, angry, lustful, lazy and gluttonous and those sins are far easier to understand than the new list.

The new list according to Claire:-

- Pride and Vanity – putting yourself above God and others.
- Jealousy – being jealous of others and coveting or envying their possessions, skills or life.

- Gluttony – the desire to consume more than one needs
- Lust – I think we still understand this!
- Anger/Wrath – uncontrollable rage
- Greed
- Laziness – both physical and spiritual laziness. Doing nothing to help society.