

## **The Seven Deadly Sins...**

### **II The Jungle**

Let's go on a trip... an adventure into a jungle. We're part of a group making our way thru the jungle... dense, hot, high grasses all around and tall trees hiding the sky except for rare glimpses of blue ... no clear path... but we're safe with our group.

Now we pause and bend down to tie one of our hiking boots... when we straighten up we don't see our group anymore. They've moved on. We don't see anyone. The jungle is so thick that we can't hear them either. Oh,oh! We're lost. And to make matters worse... a nice companion volunteered to hold our back pack while we were tying our hiking boot. We don't have any water or snack or food.

We become frightened. We hear strange sounds. How will we make it? Is there any hope?

As we look around in near panic we think we can hear voices saying, "Go to your left..." "No, straight ahead..." "Turn to your right..." Which way should we go?

### **Lost**

How many people in our world are lost?

How many don't know the way in life.

How many don't believe in God, they don't believe in the devil, they don't believe in providence, they don't believe in the last judgment, to say nothing about heaven. A person who believes in nothing can only believe in himself. And self-belief implies that anything is possible - what do lies, cheating, harm and swindling matter?

Are you lost?

What do the voices say?...

The way is all about owning stuff.

The way is all about being healthy and never growing old.

The way is all about looking good and having a perfect body.

The way is being entertained – bigger and better TVs, ipods and computer games... you'd be *lost* without them!

What is the way? How do we find the way?

### **God... and travel instructions...**

The Ten Commandments are some good travel instructions.

The Church's traditional teaching about the seven deadly sins... sins because they are ways we hurt others and ourselves, our neighborhoods and our society... anger, envy, lust, pride (arrogance), sloth, gluttony and ?.

A friend of mine told me that when he learned of these seven deadly sins it helped him with confession... now he writes on a piece of paper, "The Seven Deadlies," hands it to the priest and says: "Guilty on all counts."

### **The Seven Deadly Sins**

We might ask for God's help with these Seven Deadlies...

Help me with my envy and jealousy, that gnawing obsession that others have more than I have – and all of the commercials on TV proclaim that I should have, if I am to be really happy?

Help me with greed and pride (I'm going to combine these two here) – always wanting more, never happy with what I have? Of course, our society doesn't consider greed such a bad thing – after all, look at Enron and WorldCom and excessive executive compensation packages... How much money is enough money? Can you do anything to get ahead... even push the envelope a bit? And if your company bites the dust, and

12,000 of your employees lose their jobs and their pensions, well, that's the way the cookie crumbles.

Is there something wrong with this picture?

And can we perhaps see the shadows of this same kind of greed and pride in our own hearts... the greediness of always wanting more and never being satisfied with what we have, and seldom thanking God for what we have...

and the pride of thinking that we always have to have it our way, regardless of how this effects others.

Help me with lust? Our society says, "Heh, what's wrong with 'fooling around a bit'". "What's wrong with a little porn?" And this becomes a slippery slope that can end up damaging our relationships and our friendships. And it's such a temptation to men and to women today.

Gluttony... too much booze, too much food, too much shopping, too much Internet...too much pampering ourselves... and our society says, "What's wrong with that?" So many people today end up self-centered and pampered, seldom reaching out to help others in need.

Sloth... Ah, the couch potato syndrome...

Rest and leisure are important. But some people can get so cozy in their own little world and so self preoccupied, that they become lazy and

never motivated to get beyond their own wants and desires. Their world shrivels and shrinks til it's even too small for them.

Sloth can also describe spiritual apathy – not really caring about our spiritual life, our prayer life, our journey daily with the Lord...

Not taking time for daily prayer or spiritual reading or growing in our understanding of Jesus and his teachings and way of life.

And finally... anger... Jesus, help me with my anger.

This is a tough one. So many people are angry today. They don't get their own way... Life doesn't go according to their plan. Others don't want to do it their way. Angry thoughts can lead to angry words and angry words can spawn violent behavior.

Our society tends to use violence to solve its problems – you see it so often on TV and at the movies. Are we prone to anger, to walking around with a hammer all the time? Someone said, "If the only tool you walk around with is a hammer, everything you run into you'll see as a nail." And so many people are so angry, full of resentments and unforgiveness.

But the question is, do I need help with my anger? Do I need to say to Jesus as he passes by, "Jesus, help me.... Help me with my anger?"

*From the Desk of Donald Ware, C.P.*

---

With all of these Seven Deadly sins we have to examine our conscience and ask:

Does envy and jealousy consume my heart?

Do resentments and anger and bitterness eat away at my heart? – Is it so hard to forgive

What about greed – am I always wanting more, even if I don't really need it? Or can't afford it?

Am I lazy – a couch potato – never really interested in doing anything to help anyone else? Or always procrastinating, never quite getting around to it?

Am I spiritually lazy – not bothering to take time for prayer each day, and not bothering to bring God into my everyday life in my neighborhood, my school, my job... even my family?

Am I trapped by lust – a \$12 billion dollar a year industry in our culture?

Am I of the opinion that a little porn doesn't hurt anyone... *It hurts men who begin to view woman as boy toys, and it hurts women who feel like just another piece of meat, up for grabs.*

Am I a bit too arrogant – as if I am so much better than so many others... do I give thanks for my blessings, rather than showing them off too vainly?

Am I a bit too gluttonous - too much food, too much booze, too much shopping –trying to fill my need for God with all these other things?

What needs to be made new in our lives?

What's keeping us from being the people God wants us to be?

The Seven Deadly Sins are like powers of death,  
engines of personal destruction,  
that corrupt our lives and turn us into self-centered, selfish, and self-  
pampered individuals –  
shallow entertained consumers, who are consumed by what we consume.

What behaviors stain or tear at the fabric of my life?

Do I have a sense of my sinfulness,  
or have I lost all consciousness of sin – my sinfulness?

Do we realize that my sinfulness hurts God's creation –  
Myself and others, and even my environment?

You won't hear too much about sinfulness on MTV,  
or the major TV networks.  
But if you watch *Desperate Housewives*, or *Maury Povich*, or *Judge Judy*, or any of the CSIs... you'll see sin in action – and it seems to be  
so alluring to so many.

If we can recognize our own sinfulness,  
we can take responsibility for it rather than blaming others,  
or pretending we're not really sinful,  
or becoming depressed and despairing –  
I am the way that I am... period.

We can also recognize that our loving God doesn't abandon us.  
God wants us to flourish, not to become addicted to sin...

for sin works ruin in God's creation?

This is what Jesus came to tell us.

He himself, the innocent one, suffered at the hands of sinners...

he himself was subjected to the Powers of death –

to anger and resentment, envy and arrogance, lies and intrigue.

Jesus even underwent death, death on a cross...

to overcome the Powers of Evil in our world by his love and his forgiveness.

Do we realize that Jesus suffered and died for us...

to save us from our sinfulness?

Or have we forgotten about our sinfulness?

Do we pay too little attention to our need for God's help in our lives, each day?

Do we buy the Story of our society about the meaning of our lives...

that we are meant to be consumers,

that buying stuff, more stuff, new and improved stuff is what will make us happy and fulfilled,

and that salvation is found in being entertained consumers.

Remember God.

Remember sin.

Remember that where there is no God, there is no sin.

I like the Catholic Church's traditional teaching about sin by speaking about the Seven Deadly Sins...

Engines of destruction which make for a broken world.

Remember the Seven Deadly Sins?

Some Stories...

Jack spends a lot of time at work. His wife complains it's too much time. But Jack argues they need more money to keep them secure. "You can never have enough," he says. His wife and kids don't see enough of Jack... but he responds to their complaints, "In today's world you have to make as much as you can, when you can... and I can right now... Who knows what the future will bring?"

Joe is a pretty resentful guy who has a job he hates. When home he's a couch potato, watches way too much TV, and constantly complains about how others get the breaks and he gets nothing. He sits on a lot of anger and is bitterly resentful of his older brother who has a good job and a much nicer home than Joe. Recently Joe has gotten into Internet pornography – to pass the time away. Joe is not a happy camper, and he doesn't want any help.

Jill spends way too much time shopping – it seems to be the only thing that makes her happy. She even shops on Cable Shopping Networks, and her husband complains about the money she spends on things she doesn't need. But she's drawn to new clothes which she feels she must have, or that lovely piece of jewelry, or that exquisite \_\_\_\_\_ - you fill in the blank. She is very envious of her younger sister who lives in a better neighborhood, and forever tries to outdo and outshine her.



Know any people like these? They are good people, but each one is inflicted by one or more of what our Catholic tradition calls the 7 Deadly Sins...

**Conclusion...**

Lord, help us to recognize sinfulness in our lives.

Help us to grow in virtue.

Heal our sinfulness so that we can be the kind of people you want us to be,

bringing light and not darkness into our world,

bringing healing and not hurt into our world,

bringing faithfulness and not despair into our world,

bringing peacefulness and not anger or rage into our world.

Lord, help us to be instruments of your love.

Help us to continue your work in our world...

This is the challenge and the privilege of our Baptism.

The Eucharist calls us and strengthens us to offer ourselves with Jesus to our loving Father, and to be other Christs in our world.

Amen.