

SEVEN
DEADLY SINS



SEVEN
LIVELY VIRTUES

Answer Key

1. Introduction:

1. Sin, as the *Catechism* states, is a “turning away” from truth: a departure from right conscience. Because God is Truth and Goodness, sin amounts to a “turning away” from God. By doing this, the sinner becomes his/her own primary authority. In disobedience, the act of sinning declares divergence from the true God and allegiance to a false god: the self. This is fundamentally true of the original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden. Adam and Eve, by turning away from God, declared themselves to be “like gods.”

The Seven Deadly Sins are pride, anger, envy, avarice, lust, gluttony, and sloth. They are called “deadly” because they form grave sinful habits and bring about the tendency toward a deeply sinful nature, which can harden the heart towards God and His mercy.

2. Virtue amounts to habitual goodness. To be virtuous is to willfully and responsibly turn oneself and one’s day-to-day decisions toward the good, the honorable, the just, the pure, the gracious, and the beautiful, i.e. – towards God. The virtuous life is, in its purest form, an honest attempt to imitate Christ. Only in virtue do we find true freedom from the addictive slavery of sin. Virtue allows us to be detached from the attraction to sin, so that we can focus on deeper and deeper unity with God, wherein lies true joy.

3. Wisdom is the one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts are received through grace, especially from the sacraments. The gift of wisdom illumines the truth about God and human existence. We can prepare ourselves to receive this grace by being virtuous, especially by practicing the virtue of humility. The first verse in Wisdom states that, in “simplicity of heart,” the wise person does not test God and loves true righteousness, a principle that, in turn, directs all his actions and decisions towards God. He or she gives him/herself over to complete trust in the Lord. Therefore, a wise person is a virtuous person who understands the truth. An unwise fool, on the other hand, turns from the truth and allows him/herself to be enslaved to sin. His/her life is soon identified by deceit, vice, distrust, and all the accomplices of sin, which lead to death.

4. The response required to God’s sheer gratuitous gift of divine life is humble acceptance, gratitude and participation in His Church. This takes shape through belief, faith, trust and an honest attempt to allow one’s life to be shaped by the truth of God’s revelation in Christ. Christ, who teaches us in the Church, becomes a necessary expression of receptivity and acceptance of the ultimate Gift Giver.

**WORD
ON FIRE**

2. Pride & Humility

1. As the Catechism states, “poverty in spirit” suggests the idea of “voluntary humility,” which is a beautiful explanation of what Christ did through the Incarnation. He emptied himself completely, descending far lower than we can understand to humbly become one of us and lead us toward divine life. We can also be “poor in spirit” by emptying ourselves and allowing God to use our lives as a means to bring about His will. This means internalizing the phrase that Father Barron often uses: “Your life is not about you.” When we truly grasp this concept, letting go of our egoism and allowing God’s life to surge through us, we free ourselves from the clutches of Pride, and we find ultimate joy, happiness, and peace. We begin to truly live for God and for others.

The poor in spirit reside in the truth that the only wealth that ultimately matters is richness in relationship with God through Christ. Pride, in contrast to poverty of the spirit, leads one to determine what specific, tangible object or desire will satisfy one’s need above and beyond God.

Jesus modeled this through the incarnation and His eternal love for humankind. As Father Barron says, “Love what Jesus loved from the cross

2. The proud rely on themselves, not on God, for consolation and happiness. They cannot see God’s providence and are only focused on their own concerns, dreams, and desires. Therefore, they are unable to recognize the prompting for a deeper abundance in Christ. They are consoled by material goods, esteem from others, comforts, etc., and often cannot qualify what is “missing.” Pride makes one turn inward for the answer, which perpetuates the problem. When one allows “the Providence of the Father” to break into one’s existence, pride dissipates along with anxiety, worry and dysfunction.

3. Yes. Pride prevents us from seeing that we need forgiveness, or that “re-ordering” comes from an outside source. Therefore, by its very nature, pride keeps one in the habitual nature of assuming that one can save oneself. So the prideful cannot pray effectively as true prayer requires an attitude of submission and abandonment to God’s providence. Pride also blocks right worship because it is a disordered worship: worship of oneself. Humility must be present for us to ask for forgiveness, pray in submission to God’s will and allow God’s love and the potential for change to “break through.”

4. Paul advises us to be Christ-like in our humility: to be encouraging, loving, compassionate, merciful, full of the Spirit, and self-emptying. Paul cites the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ as the perfect examples of humble love. Christ became human and accepted the consequences of human sin through His passion and death, humbly offering His life for the forgiveness of all humankind. By participating in the Church and the sacraments, we receive the grace that helps us incorporate these Christ-like qualities into our own lives.

5. Mary’s “magnificent” is the quintessential expression of humility. Every aspect of this exultation returns glory to God and is filled with self-forgetful praise and true worship. She, in speaking about what the Mighty One has done for her, sees herself as a lowly creature and Him as Creator, full of power, mercy, faithfulness, and love. The resulting expression documents Mary’s ascent from the mere acceptance of her own life to the recognition of the divine life living within her, both literally and figuratively.

cont.

Pride & Humility *(continued)*

5. *(cont.)* Mary is given insight into the divine will, and in submitting to it, recognizes that she is being used as God's instrument for the salvation of the world. Today's culture abhors letting anyone, divine or human, use us as an "instrument." Our cultural notions of humility fool us into thinking that humility is systematic self-deprecation and a denial of one's innate worth. On the contrary, the biblical view of humility recognizes our status as God's creatures, each endowed with our own, unique mission.

Mary's statement, "from now on will all ages call me blessed" might be interpreted as a desire for lasting fame and notoriety, as opposed to a statement exemplifying true humility. However, upon further examination, one can distinguish the difference between today's cultural understanding and the biblical understanding of humility by recognizing that Mary's statement reflects a Truth that is beyond herself, not a desire to exalt herself.

3. Envy & Admiration

1. God should receive the glory for all we have done, for it is He who is the source of all Good, even the inclination toward the good, toward right desire, and toward a proper propensity for work. He is the source of all our abilities and all of our well-ordered thoughts, actions, and desires. Paul, then, implies that all of our accomplishments find their source and their completion in God.

2. Paul uses the analogy of the body to describe our relationship to one another and the relative importance of our contributions. In this analogy, he clarifies that we, like the parts of the body, are all completely and utterly necessary for the functionality of the body as a whole. We, like the parts of the body, all carry out specific roles and exercise specific “talents” in order to contribute to the body’s well being. No body part, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, can be dismissed. On the contrary, often the small and seemingly insignificant parts order the functionality of the larger and more seemingly fundamental parts. Therefore, we all serve diversely, ... and beautifully!

3. The source of these sins, according to Paul, is the “flesh,” which refers to our fallen nature as a result of Original Sin. The consequence of giving in to the “flesh” is the forfeiting of the kingdom of God. The only way to defeat this sin is to belong to Christ, which means to continually live in a disciplined rapport with one’s passions and desires.

To put this into practice, we need to love our neighbor as ourselves, and the fruits of the Spirit will find their expression in us! Love is, as Father Barron states, “willing the good of the other as other.” Because this love is an act of the will rather than a mere emotion, we can find practical ways to help ourselves continually make this decision. If we are rooted in prayer and constant communication with the divine life, this decision to love will slowly become second nature. Virtue, because it is not sought for its own sake, becomes the secondary result of true love.

4. The tenth commandment illuminates the fact that desiring another’s goods for oneself (however one defines “goods”) can lead us toward sins that keeps us from being united to God and to one another in love. St. John Chrysostom points out that the remedy for this sinful nature is to practice “good will”, which is to consciously rejoice in and proclaim the goodness and merits of others. This answer to envy, like the answer to pride and all the other capital sins, involves a deliberate act of the will, not merely an emotion.

4. Anger & Forgiveness

1. No, anger is not always sinful. It only becomes sinful when it is accompanied by the desire for revenge and the wish for misfortune to befall one's neighbor, or even less severe, with the desire to restore one's own sense of self-worth. Anger can be the expression of "righteous indignation," which is not an emotional snit, but rather, a passionate response to the tragedy of sin and the violation of divine justice. God's anger, which is exemplified over and over in the Bible, is the human expression of His deepest desire to set things right. It has nothing to do with self-satisfaction through retribution.
2. Jesus, as Father Barron defines, confronts evil by "absorbing" it and "not reacting in kind." He allows the expression of evil to expend itself upon him, and in so doing; the evil is laid to rest. Peter "reacts in kind" when confronted with evil. Through retribution, he inadvertently continues the cycle of evil.
3. This way of confronting evil, which consists of sidestepping vengeance and reacting with the practical "corporal works of mercy," redirects the energy of vengeance toward something good. This, in turn, promotes a progression of goodness, truth, and right relationship. True power finds its expression in this: the ability to redirect wrong action and misguided principles toward the greater good and realize that vengeance belongs to God. God does not need the right to prevail in order that he might say, "I told you so!" but rather, He prevails through the "Right" so that we are continuously drawn closer and closer to His divine life.
4. Jesus says that if we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven. The promise is: if we humble ourselves in forgiveness, our Father will do the same for us, but if we do not, so will we be denied forgiveness. The parable demonstrates that the debt our neighbor owes to us is truly nothing compared to the debt we owe to God for all of our sins, which he has pardoned through His own Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Therefore, we must forgive generously, as we have been forgiven with ultimate generosity.
5. The root and basis of our forgiveness of one another is God's forgiveness of us. Then we, as people of God, should treat everyone with compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience as an expression of gratitude for having been treated in this way and in obedience to His command to "love one another as I have loved you."

5. Sloth & Zeal

1. Psalm 73 portrays spiritually slothful people as being carefree and not caring about the spiritual life or the things of God. “They say, ‘Does God really know?’ ‘Does the Most High have any knowledge?’ Such, then, are the wicked, always carefree, increasing their wealth.” This passage of Psalm 73 expresses the relativistic attitude of the prideful. Being driven by their own egos, they do not recognize moral/spiritual standards outside of themselves. Rather, in questioning God, they raise themselves to the level of God. They are not necessarily lazy in their pursuits, but they are lazy in their pursuit of the spiritual.

The Psalmist is tempted to follow their example: “Is it in vain that I have kept my heart clean, washed my hands in innocence?” His afflictions tempted him to abandon God and follow the ways of the world. Fortunately, he sees the folly of the slothful when he enters the sanctuary. “Till I entered the sanctuary of God and came to understand their end. You set them, indeed, on a slippery road; you hurl them down to ruin”. It is in worship that he recognized and fought off the perils of slothfulness. Humbly entering the sanctuary with the knowledge of who he was and who God was put him in the state of right worship. He was honest about his mistakes, asking forgiveness, so he renewed his relationship with God and could be able to focus on God and on His ways.

2. Presumption is the act of taking for granted God’s mercy and assuming that He will always overlook our offenses. It is comparable to a child assuming that his or her father will always provide favors regardless of their behavior. Presumption helps to attack and break down our prayer life because it renders the need for prayer useless. If God will always take care of us, why do we need to pray? If God will overlook all we do, why do we need to ask for forgiveness? We lose our spiritual edge – we become lax and apathetic to all things spiritual. We open ourselves up to temptation and to sin, and then do not repent or care much about our sinful behavior. Gradually, this attitude breaks down our relationship with God as He grows distant in our memory and becomes irrelevant in our lives.

3. Mary was in haste because she was on a mission to go see her relative, Elizabeth, who was also with child (John the Baptist). Mary’s example shows us that when a mission is given one must immediately spring forth and go, answering the call of God. She knew that her mission was to be the mother of God and she also had a sense that Elizabeth and her child were part of that mission. She did not delay or put it aside, but instead set out with a spiritual urgency befitting the situation.

4. CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

1. Give food to the hungry
2. Give drink to the thirsty
3. Give shelter to the homeless
4. Visit the imprisoned
5. Care for the sick
6. Clothe the naked
7. Bury the dead.

Sloth & Zeal (*continued*)

4. (*cont.*)

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

1. Pray for the living and the dead
2. Instruct the ignorant
3. Counsel the doubtful
4. Admonish sinners
5. Bear patiently the troublesome
6. Comfort the afflicted
7. Forgive offenses

These works of mercy are essential to the spiritual life because they force us to “die to ourselves” and to love another. They are living acts of faith that show we have taken Jesus’ commandment to “love one another” seriously. They counteract sloth because they are acts of the will that exhibit love for those in need.

5. Jesus insists that we care for the ‘least one’ of society. The Kingdom of God is found in reaching out to the ‘other’ in love (i.e. willing the good of the other as other). The divine life that all the saints share in is in giving themselves away. This is not an abstract principle, but something very concrete. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy of the concrete means all persons must use in order to enter the Kingdom of God. They are not only for “religious” people nor are they to be done only to “religious” people, for the end of all human beings is the Kingdom of God, but that spiritual state is only given if these concrete actions are taken and done for all persons.

6. Avarice & Generosity

1. Wealth is good (like all of creation), but it is not to be worshipped or put at a higher level than God. Christian discipleship demands a spirit of detachment from earthly things so that your attachment to Christ (the treasure of heaven) is entire. CCC 2544 says, “Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them “renounce all that [they have]” for his sake and that of the Gospel... The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.” The precept “You are what you eat” is true in this regard, for if you fill yourself with the riches of the earth you will become anxious because they are temporal and ever fading (“treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal”), but if you allow God to fill you with Himself (treasure in heaven) through detachment, faith, and the sacraments, you will become like Him (i.e. Love).

2. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus conveys the supreme importance Jesus places on generosity to the poor. In torment, the Rich Man cries out to Abraham for pity, but Abraham does not respond compassionately: “My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented”. The Rich Man did not give away what he received. He clung to his life and his earthly treasures. Therefore, he lived in torment because he did not allow the divine life to flow through him. Jesus places supreme importance on generosity to the poor for it is a necessary means to salvation.

3. The Catechism defines the common good as “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.” Our personal responsibility of working for the common good is universally, not particularly, binding. This means that we must will the good of all regardless of who they are or of our own self-interest. Love -- willing the good of the other as other -- is the proper path for the achievement of the common good. The common good will not be achieved in a community lacking in love. Love includes provision for physical needs to “make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life.” The corporeal works of mercy speak to this very issue of how to contribute to the common good.

4. Paul urges the Corinthians to be generous like the Macedonians who in “ their profound poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity.” This passage references Paul’s collection to help other Christian communities in times of need, in this case, Christians in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-27; 1 Cor 16:1-4). Paul doesn’t command them to give, but he encourages them to give for it will “test the genuineness of [their] love”. So, the donation of money was not mandatory, but in their desire to be genuine disciples of Christ, charitable giving in monetary form was important to facilitate the common good of the whole Christian community.

Paul evokes Exodus 16 to show that riches should not be hoarded but shared. As they traveled through the desert towards the Promised Land, the Israelites received manna from heaven each morning. They were instructed to take just what they needed for the people in their own tent. When the amount of manna was measured each day, each tent had enough for their needs: “Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less.” As a community, the Israelites shared their “wealth” because in reality, it came from God as gift and did not really belong to each of them individually. God gives us riches in order that we may share them, allowing us to imitate his perfect generosity.

7. Gluttony & Asceticism

1. In Matthew 4:1-4, the devil was trying to get Jesus to break his fast and not trust in the Lord God. Jesus' refusal to break his fast is the opposite response of Adam and Eve: "the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes and delightful to behold, and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat" (Gen. 3:6). Jesus' refusal points to how the New Adam responds to the attraction of earthly goods: detachment. He tames his earthly desires, so that he may be spiritually nourished by "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" and stay faithful to His mission. In effect, the devil was asking Jesus to choose his own desires over God's plan, which is a temptation that we all face. We can fight this temptation by remaining close to Christ (the Word of God) in all of his manifestations, especially in the Eucharist.

2. Jesus' enemies accuse him of being "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners". This suggests that Jesus saw food and drink as good because they were created by God to satisfy our needs. Gluttony is a disordered appetite, while Jesus saw enjoyment of food and drink in moderation as a natural, well-ordered appetite.

Jesus also preached that "wisdom is vindicated by her works," which meant that the fruit of faith (works) is much more important than outward habits or rituals. Jesus' enemies harshly judged both Jesus and John the Baptist for religious views that threatened their own power. However, they tried to turn the people against Jesus and John by using their outward habits as "evidence" of their faults, so they could deflect the works or message of these two holy men.

3. Jesus makes the assumption that his contemporaries fasted primarily to gain public approval and admiration among men and did not direct their fast to God. Jesus teaches that fasting should be done in private without any acknowledgement from others. The proper attitude for fasting is to do it quietly, without boasting because the reward (treasures in heaven) will come from "your Father who see[s] you in secret." This reward is the only thing that will truly satisfy, as all the "treasures on earth" will not quench our innate desire for God.

Fasting and prayer challenge our will to focus on the true object of our desire, God. Fasting and prayer are practices that will direct our desires to things of God, not things of the earth.

4. Isaiah 58 makes clear the fast God desires: "to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the throngs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke . . . to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh." God does not want fasting to be done for the sake of fasting, rather he wants it to be done so that you may be a better conduit of his love, denying yourself so that you can see and address the needs of others.

8. Lust & Chastity

1. Jesus sees lust beginning in one's heart (i.e., desire). Jesus sounds rather extreme here because his sole concern is that you love God, the true Good. Desiring God above all things is the only way that you will have joy and peace, and that will be obtained by purging all that is a hindrance to having God as your ultimate desire.

Lust is using a person as means to your own end, rather than desiring what is best for that person. Treating people as ends in themselves is embodied in love (i.e., willing the good of the other as other), which means respecting their capacity to choose the good for themselves.

2. The temptation to use people for your own pleasure or purposes does not disappear just because you are married. Loving one another demands that you seek the good of the other as other, not as a good for yourself. Lust is not defined as sexual relations outside of marriage, but as using a person for your own pleasure or purposes. Vigilance is required for all of us, whether married or not, to avoid using others in any capacity for our own gain or pleasure.

3. Paul finds lust to be a grave sin against Christ because it is not the way Christ loves us. As Christians, we are baptized into Christ's body and our bodies become "temples of the Holy Spirit." We belong to God and not to our own ego and its desires, so we are called to love as God loves.

We are also called to desire Christ above all else, so the soul can be well ordered and life can flow smoothly through the soul. Christ is the hinge around which the soul is properly ordered.

4. John defines lust as love for things of the flesh and what we see in the world. Lust is related to pride in that both place something that is not God as the center and priority of one's life. Lust is an attachment to the pleasures of the flesh, whereas pride is an attachment to one's autonomy and the refusal to be other-serving. Both put the ego or self ahead of anyone or anything else. Others cannot be truly loved by a habitual prideful or lustful person.

John says that the "world passes away, and the lust of it", so attachment to the world and the things in the world does not last since they are temporal. Attaching oneself to the will of God is the sure way to find happiness because His will does not change and it abides forever.

5. As the Catechism says, chastity is "the integration of sexuality within the person". In order to achieve this, one must undergo "an apprenticeship in self-mastery". Christ is the model of chastity because his sexuality was perfectly ordered to His mission to love.

It is a common mistake to equate chastity and celibacy, but celibacy simply means not partaking in sexual intercourse. Although married couples are not celibate, they must still remain chaste, remaining faithful and loyal to each other "until death do us part." Another risk is idolatry – worshipping a spouse or person with whom we are romantically involved, putting the worship of the one, true God at risk.