

Understanding the 7 Deadly Sins

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The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also refers to these sins as “capital sins” and explains why they are the most dangerous. “Vices can be classified according to the virtues they oppose, or also be linked to capital sins which Christian experience has distinguished, following St. John Cassian and St. Gregory the Great. They are called “capital” because they engender other sins, other vices. They are pride, avarice [greed], envy, wrath, lust, gluttony and sloth” (No. 1866).

1. **Pride:** an excessive love of self or the desire to be better or more important than others. “Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that ‘everyone should look upon his neighbor (without exception) as “another self,” above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity” (CCC, No. 1931).
2. **Lust:** an intense desire, usually for sexual pleasure, but also for money, power or fame. “The God of promises always warned man against seduction by what from the beginning has seemed ‘good for food...a delight to the eyes...to be desired to make one wise’” (CCC, No. 2541).
3. **Gluttony:** over-consumption, usually of food or drink. “The virtue of temperance disposes us to avoid every kind of excess: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco or medicine” (CCC, No. 2290).
4. **Greed:** the desire for and love of possessions. “Sin...is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods” (No. 1849).
5. **Sloth (or Acedia):** physical laziness, also disinterest in spiritual matters or neglecting spiritual growth. “Acedia or spiritual sloth goes so far as to refuse the joy that comes from God and to be repelled by divine goodness” (CCC, No. 2094).
6. **Anger or wrath:** uncontrolled feelings of hatred or rage. “Anger is a desire for revenge... The Lord says, ‘Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment’” (CCC, No. 2302).
7. **Envy:** sadness or desire for the possessions, happiness, talents or abilities of another “Envy can lead to the worst crimes. ‘Through the devil’s envy death entered the world’” (CCC, No. 2553).