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SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Reconciliation and the Gifts of  
the Spirit

FRANK ARUNDELL

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## Reconciliation and the Gifts of the Spirit

The attribution of the word deadly is usually applied to those phenomena or instruments that have the power of claiming lives. Weapons are made to kill and can be called deadly. The natural elements such as storms, fires, earthquakes and the like are deadly when they're severe enough to snuff out peoples lives. Thoughtlessness or ignorance can be deadly as the cause of accidents that kill; as well as diseases, starvation, exposure, etc., all ripe with the possibility of claiming lives; but how about what is called *sin*, how can sin be deadly? What is sin? Word Web says it's "*An act that is regarded by theologians as a transgression of God's will.*" Does that mean for one who freely regards himself or herself an atheist without the "benefit" of theology there is no such thing as sin? What about the non-committed, the agnostic, does he or she not know what sin is? If one doesn't know there is a God— how can one know that there are transgressions against his will, particularly transgressions called deadly. Has sin only religious significance, or can we believe or at least understand that there are "secular" sins as well?

In countries where there is a tacit separation between church and state, we could say that it is the *law* that assigns right from wrong and a secular "sin" is what is a wrong under the law. A transgression against the state, so to speak, where the state is the ultimate authority having been awarded that distinction by its people. In the United States the Constitution is the basic law of the land. It is a codification of rights and wrongs, but as a secular instrument susceptible to mutability it becomes relative to the needs and desires of the people at any given time. This

has happened many times over the course of our history both for our benefit and for our detriment alike. Wisdom has not always been objective in changing the law. Originally, our Constitution was, for the most part, founded on the immutable principles of “nature and nature’s God” under the rubrics of Protestant Christianity. The law can become “deadly” under the judgement of the state in cases of capital punishment. Article [X] (Amendment 10 - Reserved Powers):

*The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.*

Currently, 32 of the 50 states can impose the death penalty for capital crimes. I think it is fair to say that serious “sins” against the state may be called deadly in that respect. In this essay it is important to emphasize that for most of us crimes are sins, but for others “sins” are not necessarily crimes. In this way, with those differences of opinion, the state can be in perpetual conflict with certain religious principles. For example, in the United States, under certain conditions, abortion is not a crime, on the other hand, for certain religious groups within the country abortion is a grave sin and should be a crime. Some say it’s tantamount to murder.

With the “coincidence of opposites” firmly in mind I suppose one can say that there are no wrongs without rights— nor rights without wrongs. Philosophically conceiving of Creation as a huge GOOD (a right) as well as an act of God, “being” itself becomes an intrinsic good and Ultimate Being is God himself— if you happen to follow the benefits of theology. If you do not, the Natural Law out of “creation” remains an ultimate GOOD carrying with it its negative opposite i.e., DISINTEGRATION (death). If one is prone to play the chicken and egg game, it is pretty obvious that Creation, which came first, is the original basic good with teleological attributes.

While Philosophy, Theology and Psychology are continuously trying to sort this out, the “good” has been made clear for the majority of us by the grace of God in Scripture— from the teachings and promises of Jesus Christ without all the complexity and human logic. In our opinion the concept of sin per se originated in creation itself and was eventually grasped by man as a rejection of the Ultimate Good by using his gift of freedom; in essence, turning against the Creator, the Source of all Being whom he was privileged to recognize after the historic *brain to mind* transformation. Man is made, it is said, “in the *image and likeness* of God”— once he got to the point in human evolution where he was able to recognize that on his own. Anthropology surely supports the idea.

Most people know that the story of sin, especially deadly sin, is of a higher order than crimes against the state since most crimes of a premeditated nature are the result of mans predilection to sin and his willingness to act. In other words the sin comes before the act. In the human being, unique among all other creatures, ones conscience is understood as God’s voice resounding in the human *heart*. Much of modern psychology would take issue with this understanding. Still, generally speaking, all law is primarily based on the ancient *a priori* understanding of the value and meaning of life inscribed there; the place where the Spirit of God meets the *free* spirit of man in his innermost personal being; his life. At Sinai, it was Moses who brought these ancient basic precepts to the attention of the Israelites on their trek from slavery in Egypt. It was Israel who was promised by the prophets, and fully expected a Messiah, a savior at the fullness of time. Why just the Jews, why not the Indians or the Chinese? In fact, all races had their primitive understanding of the Deity every where in the world as the transformation of Sapiens cascaded. Of course, for non-believers this makes no sense. Anything that can not be seen

does not exist. For them a division of philosophy called *ethics* is the norm that carries the weight of right and wrong, not the God of the Jews or the other Creator gods of the primitives. “Ethics (also moral philosophy) is the branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. The term ethics derives from the Ancient Greek word ἠθικός ethikos, which is derived from the word ἦθος ethos (habit, “custom”). The branch of philosophy axiology comprises the sub-branches of Ethics and aesthetics, each concerned with concepts of value all brought together by the philosophers of early Greece.”(Wikipedia)

What is often forgotten is that “habit or custom” needs to include all the prehistoric mental concepts in the developing brain of early man. Ethics is a relatively recent idea founded in philosophy.

“As a branch of philosophy, ethics investigates the questions “What is the best way for people to live?” and “What actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances?” In practice, ethics seeks to resolve questions of human morality, by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime. As a field of intellectual enquiry, moral philosophy also is related to the fields of moral psychology, descriptive ethics, and value theory”. (Wikipedia)

We should note here that modern secular ethics does not take into consideration the idea of sin because it is areligious. That certainly does not mean that religious people are unethical, although some “religions” of history have been seen to fit that category. Most ethical culturists follow a *consensus* of right and wrong. Since there is no authority above the law, consensus becomes the ultimate authority when enacted into law. Everything is perfectly okay as long as it is legal– as seen from an “ethical” purview. In the twenty first century it should be

well understood how the mass-communication media, with the proper amount of money and power, can easily control the consensus. This is one of the reasons why the “everybody’s doing it” phenomenon is becoming the new normal. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the penumbra of primitive and biblical religious thought lies behind all of our ethical values. In a way, ethical humanism is for all practical purposes a modern pseudo-religion which simply does not admit of God. We have all heard how activists are “ethically” working to remove the Ten Commandments from public structures. Year after year human beings the world over are becoming more and more submerged in the inextricable relativism of philosophical differences where the good and the bad become arbitrary. An equality of opposites rather than a coincidence of opposites. Nike says: “Just do it!” This and other such catchy phrases from our commercial industry are ejaculations of intent based strictly on self satisfaction and not necessarily on any serious consideration of innate-good or the “greater-good” as opposed to evil. Social Engineers are having a field-day as laws become loosened from firmer principles initially established on religious grounds where transgressions were called sins and could be forgiven or retained in the name of Jesus Christ. When Luther removed the Sacrament of Penance from his understanding of Christianity, forgiveness for sins became a matter between the individual sinner and God the Holy Spirit, without any intermediary. The Laestadian Lutheran Church says:

“In the Roman Catholic Church there are seven sacraments. During the transitional period of the Reformation, the number of sacraments became a topic of discussion. According to the position of Luther and his friends, the sacraments were to be acts founded on the commandment of God. The Apology to the Augsburg Confession states the matter as follows: ‘The

genuine sacraments, therefore, are Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution (which is the sacrament of penitence)” (XIII:4). Absolution was removed from among the sacraments, because the promise of God was not connected to visible elements but to the Holy Spirit. The resurrected Christ said to His disciples, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whosoever sins ye remit...” (John 20:22,23). The sacraments have not been instituted by men or the church, but God has instituted them.”

[www.laestadianlutheran.org/treasurehidden/sacraments.html](http://www.laestadianlutheran.org/treasurehidden/sacraments.html)

With regard to the Sacrament of Penance, now known as Reconciliation, I think it's a good idea to copy the whole passage from John 20 so its meaning becomes as clear as possible without an accompanying theological explanation:

*19 “When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’”* (John 20:19-23 Oremus Bible Browser, New Revised Edition)

It would seem that this passage is more of a directive, a commission if you will; particularly with the line: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” It also appears that the disciples had been given some discretion by Jesus with the dispensation of the sacrament. It becomes quite clear, at least to us, that the ability to dispense the sacrament is only through the power of the Holy Spirit “breathed” on them by Jesus, and not

through any power of their own. I recall as a child the Baltimore Catechism saying: “A sacrament is an outward sign *instituted by Christ* to give grace.” (Lesson Eleventh, p 17, Baltimore I)

We are reminded of Jesus saying to us all: “Without me you can do nothing.” (John 15: 5)

Today’s Catechism gives us a little more explanation about the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Here is a copy of the brief form with its introduction exposing a bit more of its history.

Introduction:

“Over the centuries the concrete form in which the Church has exercised this power received from the Lord has varied considerably. During the first centuries the reconciliation of Christians who had committed particularly grave sins after their Baptism (for example, idolatry, murder, or adultery) was tied to a very rigorous discipline, according to which penitents had to do public penance for their sins, often for years before receiving reconciliation. To this “order of penitents” (which concerned only certain grave sins), one was only rarely admitted and in certain regions only once in a lifetime. During the seventh century Irish missionaries, inspired by the Eastern monastic tradition, took to continental Europe the “private” practice of penance, which does not require public and prolonged completion of penitential works before reconciliation with the Church. From that time on, the sacrament has been performed in secret between penitent and priest. This new practice envisioned the possibility of repetition and so opened the way to a regular frequenting of this sacrament. It allowed the forgiveness of grave sins and venial sins to be integrated into one sacramental celebration. In its

main lines this is the form of penance that the Church has practiced down to our day.

1485 “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week,” Jesus showed himself to his apostles. “He breathed on them, and said to them: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained’” (Jn 20:19, 22-23).

1486 The forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism is conferred by a particular sacrament called the sacrament of conversion, confession, penance, or reconciliation.

1487 The sinner wounds God’s honor and love, his own human dignity as a man called to be a son of God, and the spiritual well-being of the Church, of which each Christian ought to be a living stone.

1488 To the eyes of faith no evil is graver than sin and nothing has worse consequences for sinners themselves, for the Church, and for the whole world.

1489 To return to communion with God after having lost it through sin is a process born of the grace of God who is rich in mercy and solicitous for the salvation of men. One must ask for this precious gift for oneself and for others.

1490 The movement of return to God, called conversion and repentance, entails sorrow for and abhorrence of sins committed, and the firm purpose of sinning no more in the future. Conversion touches the past and the future and is nourished by hope in God’s mercy.

1491 The sacrament of Penance is a whole consisting in three actions of the penitent and the priest’s absolution. The penitent’s acts are repentance, confession or disclosure of sins to the priest, and the intention to make reparation and do works of reparation.

1492 Repentance (also called contrition) must be inspired by motives that arise from faith. If repentance arises from love of

charity for God, it is called “perfect” contrition; if it is founded on other motives, it is called “imperfect contrition.”

1493 One who desires to obtain reconciliation with God and with the Church, must confess to a priest all the unconfessed grave sins he remembers after having carefully examined his conscience. The confession of venial faults, without being necessary in itself, is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church.

1494 The confessor proposes the performance of certain acts of “satisfaction” or “penance” to be performed by the penitent in order to repair the harm caused by sin and to re-establish habits befitting a disciple of Christ.

1495 Only priests who have received the faculty of absolving from the authority of the Church (Ordination) can forgive sins in the name of Christ.

1496 The spiritual effects of the sacrament of Penance are:  
—reconciliation with God by which the penitent recovers grace;  
—reconciliation with the Church;  
—remission of the eternal punishment incurred by mortal sins;  
—remission, at least in part, of temporal punishments resulting from sin;  
—peace and serenity of conscience, and spiritual consolation;  
—an increase of spiritual strength for the Christian battle.

1497 Individual and integral confession of grave sins followed by absolution remains the only ordinary means of reconciliation with God and with the Church. ( The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1485-1497).

From John 20; it is interesting to note that this was one of the very first assignments given directly to the disciples on the day of the resurrection— thus emphasizing its importance of the Sacrament for the future of the Church.

The words of absolution are as follows: *“I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* (In Latin) *“Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti”*). Following absolution, the penitent usually recites the act of contrition. *“O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of Heaven, and the pains of Hell; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen”*.

In (1551) the Council of Trent declared:

*“As a means of regaining grace and justice, penance was at all times necessary for those who had defiled their souls with any mortal sin. . . . Before the coming of Christ, penance was not a sacrament, nor is it since His coming a sacrament for those who are not baptized. But the Lord then principally instituted the Sacrament of Penance, when, being raised from the dead, he breathed upon His disciples saying: ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained’ (John 20:22-23). By which action so signal and words so clear the consent of all the Fathers has ever understood that the power of forgiving and retaining sins was communicated to the Apostles and to their lawful successors, for the reconciling of the faithful who have fallen after Baptism. (Session. XIV, c. i) Farther on the council expressly states that Christ left priests, His own vicars, as judges (praesides et iudices), unto whom all the mortal crimes into which the faithful may have fallen should be revealed in order that, in accordance with the power of the keys, they may pronounce the sentence of forgiveness or retention of sins” (Session. XIV, c. v)*

What are the Seven “deadly” sins and what is killed by them? “The Catholic Church maintains that seven vices in particular lead to breaking one or more of the Ten Commandments. These particular bad habits are called the seven deadly sins because, according to Catholicism, they’re mortal sins — *sins that kill the life of sanctifying grace*. Pope Gregory the Great made up the list in the 6th century, and in the 14th century, Geoffrey Chaucer popularized them in his *Canterbury Tales*. (The Wiley Brand, *The Catholic Church’s Seven Deadly Sins*.)

New Advent enumerates them here with a short explanation of each

**PRIDE:** One of the seven capital sins. Pride is undue self-esteem or self-love, which seeks attention and honor and sets oneself in competition with God (1866). It is essentially an act or disposition of the will desiring to be considered better than a person really is. Pride may be expressed in different ways: by taking personal credit for gifts or possessions, as if they had not been received from God; by glorying in achievements, as if they were not primarily the result of divine goodness and grace; by minimizing one’s defects or claiming qualities that are not actually possessed; by holding oneself superior to others or disdainful of them because they lack what the proud person has; by magnifying the defects of others or dwelling on them. When pride is carried to the extent that a person is unwilling to acknowledge dependence on God and refuses to submit his or her will to God or lawful authority, it is a grave sin.

**COVETOUSNESS :**(from Latin cupiditosus, “greedy”; “to crave”) is the inordinate love for riches. Its special malice, broadly speaking, lies in that it makes the getting and keeping of money, possessions, and the like, a purpose in itself to live

for. It does not see that these things are valuable only as instruments for the conduct of a rational and harmonious life, due regard being paid of course to the special social condition in which one is placed. It is called a capital vice because through it many other sins are committed. It is more to be dreaded in that it often cloaks itself as a virtue, or insinuates itself under the pretext of making a decent provision for the future. In so far as avarice is an incentive to injustice in acquiring and retaining of wealth, it is frequently a grievous sin. In itself, however, and in so far as it implies simply an excessive desire of, or pleasure in, riches, it is commonly not a mortal sin.

**LUST:** The inordinate craving for or indulgence in sexual pleasure. The evil of lust is reducible to this: that sexual satisfaction is sought for either outside marriage or, at any rate, in a manner which is contrary to the laws that govern marital intercourse. Indulging in lust is a mortal sin, provided of course, it is done in a way that is voluntary in itself and fully deliberate. This is the testimony of St. Paul in the letter to the Galatians, 5:19:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury... Of which I warned you, as I have warned you before, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.” This teaching applies to external and internal sins alike: “Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

**ANGER:** The desire of vengeance. How we judge it depends upon the quality of the vengeance and the quantity of the passion. When these are in conformity with the prescriptions of balanced reason, anger is not a sin. It is rather a praiseworthy thing and justifiable with a proper zeal. It becomes sinful when

it is sought to wreak vengeance upon one who has not deserved it, or to a greater extent than it has been deserved, or in conflict with the dispositions of law, or from an improper motive. The sin is then in a general sense mortal as being opposed to justice and charity. It may, however, be venial because the punishment aimed at is but a trifling one or because of lack of full deliberation. Likewise, anger is sinful when there is an undue vehemence in the passion itself, whether inwardly or outwardly. Ordinarily it is then considered a venial sin unless the excess is so great as to go counter seriously to the love of God or of one's neighbor.

**GLUTTONY:** Overindulgence in food or drink. Gluttony is one of the seven capital sins (1866). The moral deformity discernible in this vice lies in its defiance of the order postulated by reason, which prescribes necessity as the measure of indulgence in eating and drinking. A glutton wants things according to the apt rendering of Father Joseph Rickaby: too soon, too expensively, too much, too eagerly, too daintily. Clearly one who uses food or drink in such a way as to injure his health or impair the mental equipment needed for the discharge of his duties, is guilty of the sin of gluttony. It is incontrovertible that to eat or drink for the mere pleasure of the experience without desire of nourishment or table fellowship, is likewise to commit the sin of gluttony. Someone habitually gluttonous is so wedded to the pleasures of the table as to live merely to eat and drink, so minded as to be of the number of those, described by the Apostle St. Paul, "whose god is their belly" (Phil 3:19). Such a one would be guilty of mortal sin. Likewise a person who, by excesses in eating and drinking, would have greatly impaired his health, or unfitted himself for duties for the performance of which he has a grave obligation, might be guilty of mortal sin. (It should also be said that an

inordinate accumulation of worldly goods would also come under the heading of Gluttony.)

ENVY: Resentment or sadness at another's good fortune of the seven capital sins, envy is contrary to the tenth commandment (2539). Envy is not quite the same as jealousy. Jealously seeks another advantage for oneself while envy tries to destroy another advantage. Jealousy can be good depending on what one is actually desiring. St. Paul wrote that his apostolate was to make his fellow Jews jealous of Christians — not so that they would persecute and try to destroy them (as in envy) but so that they would seek the spiritual advantages of conversion to Christ (see Romans 11:15).

SLOTH: A culpable lack of physical or spiritual effort; acedia or laziness. One of the capital sins (1866, 2094, 2733). One of the seven capital sins which represent the “I don't care” feeling. A man sees that the practice of virtue is hard and so resists the service of God. He becomes slothful and his soul grows sluggish and lazy at the thought of the painful life journey. The idea of right living inspires not joy but disgust, because of its laboriousness. This is the notion commonly obtaining, and in this sense sloth is not a specific vice according to the teaching of St. Thomas, but rather a circumstance of all vices. Ordinarily it will not have the malice of mortal sin unless, of course, we conceive it to be so total that because of it one is willing to reject some serious obligation. In this sense sloth is directly opposed to charity. The man who is slothful violates, therefore, expressly the first and the greatest of the commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength.” (Mark 12:30).

We have taken the liberty to list them in the order which we learned them from Baltimore I. Wikipedia has given us a brief history which we will copy here:

“The modern concept of the seven deadly sins is linked to the works of the fourth-century monk Evagrius Ponticus, who listed eight evil thoughts. They were translated into the Latin of Western Christianity largely due to the writings of John Cassian,(360-435 CE) thus becoming part of the Western tradition's spiritual pietas (or Catholic devotions), In AD 590, a little over two centuries after Evagrius wrote his list, Pope Gregory I (The Great) revised this list to form the more common Seven Deadly Sins, by folding (sorrow/despair/despondency) into acedia; vainglory into pride; and adding envy. The order used by Pope Gregory, was repeated by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) centuries later in his epic poem The Divine Comedy, The modern Catholic Catechism lists the sins in Latin as "superbia, avaritia, invidia, ira, luxuria, gula, pigritia seu acedia", with the English translation of "pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth/acedia". Each of the seven deadly sins now also has an opposite among corresponding seven holy virtues (sometimes also referred to as the contrary virtues). In parallel order to the sins they oppose, the seven holy virtues are humility, charity, kindness, patience, chastity, temperance, and diligence”.(Wikipedia) In the order we have listed the sins, their opposing virtues would line up like this: Humility, Charity, Chastity, Patience, Temperance, Kindness and Diligence.

Similar to these contrary-virtues are the gifts or the fruits of the Holy Spirit. In simple terms they could be thought of in psychological terms as the progression and maturation of the human mind. They would be Wisdom, Understanding, Council, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord.

If one has been fortunate enough to be graced to believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he or she has accepted as *truth* (with no physical proof) that there is a God, and that God is the creator of all things visible and invisible. This would surely include the incredible evolutionary progression in creation leading to the modern human body and mind commonly known as soul. It would be difficult for the average thinking person *not* to know of the connection between God and his children on this equally incredible blue globe of ours– even without the aid of philosophy, psychology, physiology, theology, etc.. Actually, the magnificence of nature and human-nature are continuously before our eyes; within our hearing; before the proximity of our noses; close enough to touch as well as deep in our conscious and unconscious selves. Our sense of a relationship with the Supernatural Power of God encompassing all that is, has also been fused with our very own being; and it has been thus ever since we became aware of ourselves as selves, and other selves as our kind; our brothers and sisters. The manifestation of that fusion is acknowledged in the gifts of the Spirit, the giver of life.

“The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are enumerated in Isaiah 11:2-3. They are present in their fullness in Jesus Christ but are found in all Christians who are in a state of grace. We receive them when we are infused with sanctifying grace, the life of God within us, or participation in the life of God; for example, when we receive a sacrament worthily, particularly Penance and The Holy Eucharist. As the current Catechism of the Catholic Church (para. 1831) notes, "They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them." Infused with His gifts, we respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as if by instinct, the way Christ Himself would.”([about.com/religion/catholic](http://about.com/religion/catholic))

We found a short explanation of each one which fundamentally clarifies its meaning.

### *Wisdom*

Wisdom is the first and highest gift of the Holy Spirit, because it is the perfection of the theological virtue of faith. Through wisdom, we come to value correctly those things which we believe through faith. The truths of Christian belief are more important than the things this world offers, and wisdom helps us to order our relationship to the created world properly, loving Creation for the sake of God, rather than for its own sake.

### *Understanding*

Understanding is the second gift of the Holy Spirit, and people sometimes have a hard time understanding (no pun intended) how it differs from wisdom. While wisdom is the desire to contemplate the things of God, understanding allows us grasp, at least in a limited way, the very essence of the truths of the Catholic Faith. Through understanding, we can gain a certitude about our beliefs that moves beyond faith.

### *Counsel*

Counsel, the third gift of the Holy Spirit, is the perfection of the cardinal virtue of prudence. Prudence can be practiced by anyone, but the gift of counsel is supernatural. Through this gift of the Holy Spirit, we are able to judge how best to act almost by intuition. Because of the gift of counsel, Christians need not fear to stand up for the truths of the Faith, because the Holy Spirit will guide us in defending those truths.

## *Fortitude*

While counsel is the perfection of a cardinal virtue, fortitude is both a gift of the Holy Spirit and a cardinal virtue. Fortitude is ranked as the fourth gift of the Holy Spirit because it gives us the strength to follow through on the actions suggested by the gift of counsel. While fortitude is sometimes called courage, it goes beyond what we normally think of as courage. Fortitude is the virtue of the martyrs that allows them to suffer death rather than to renounce their Faith.

## *Knowledge*

The fifth gift of the Holy Spirit, knowledge, is often confused with both wisdom and understanding. Like wisdom, knowledge is the perfection of faith, but whereas wisdom gives us the desire to judge all things according to the truths of the Catholic Faith, knowledge is the actual ability to do so. Like counsel, it is aimed at our actions in this life. In a limited way, knowledge allows us to see the circumstances of our life the way that God sees them. Through this gift of the Holy Spirit, we can determine God's purpose for our lives and live it accordingly.

## *Piety*

Piety, the sixth gift of the Holy Spirit, is the perfection of the virtue of religion. While we tend to think of religion today as the external elements of our faith, it really means the willingness to worship and to serve God. Piety takes that willingness beyond simply a sense of duty, so that we desire to worship God and to serve Him out of love.

## *Fear of the Lord*

The seventh gift of the Holy Spirit is a healthy fear of the Lord, and perhaps no other gift of the Holy Spirit is so misunderstood. We think of fear and hope as opposites, but the fear of the Lord confirms the theological virtue of hope. This gift of the Holy Spirit gives us the desire not to offend God by sinning, as well as the certainty that God will supply us the grace that we need in order to keep from offending Him and others. Our desire not to offend God is more than simply a sense of duty; like piety, the fear of the Lord arises out of love for God and neighbor. ([about.com/religion/catholic/gifts of the Holy Spirit](http://about.com/religion/catholic/gifts%20of%20the%20Holy%20Spirit))

With these thoughts in mind we have found a small piece in a blog we have frequently used in the past, *New Advent*. It was written by Joseph Pearce, bio below. It is titled:

**“Things are getting worse and there’s nothing to worry about”:**

In the midst of the sodomy of Gomorrah, the very fabric of the family has been ripped to shreds and is being trod triumphantly underfoot by those who wear their own Pride with pride. This ascendant Pride is seeking to trample the humble under foot, rubbing the noses of Christians in the dirt. In some western countries, those who espouse the morality that people have always espoused throughout the whole of human history are now being sent to prison for the crime of calling a sin sinful. The very word “sin” has been banished from the vocabulary, as has “virtue,” making all discussion of morality practically impossible.

As secular fundamentalists in the West make a mockery of traditional morality, Islamic fundamentalists in the Middle East are raping, pillaging and butchering with reckless abandon.

Refugees, fleeing from the Islamic butchers, flood into a faltering and falling Europe.

No, there's no doubt about it. Things are definitely getting worse.

And yet there really is nothing to worry about. No. Really. There isn't.

At this point, many will no doubt believe me to be a latter-day Nero, fiddling merrily and perhaps madly while Rome burns. My response would be that it is the world and not Rome that is burning. Rome remains, while the world around her burns. Rome, in the other-worldly sense in which she is rightly called the Eternal City, always points to the Heavenly Jerusalem that is forever beyond the reach of the flames of infernal worldliness. It was this sense that T. S. Eliot had in mind when he omitted Rome from the list of "falling towers" of worldly pomp which were ultimately "unreal": Falling towers—Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, London... unreal.

Rome, in this sense, and for the sake of avoiding an ecclesiological argument that does not serve our present purpose, refers to all of Christendom and may be seen as a symbol of the Church Militant, i.e. the Church at War, the Church on earth, which never surrenders its divine mission to the world and its whims. There can be no compromise, in our age or any age, between the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Age, between the Heilige Geist and the Zeitgeist. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the difference between these two spirits is the defining difference that separates the sheep from the goats.

The sheep, those who belong to the flock of Christ, do not concern themselves with the world and its self-destructive decline towards the abyss to which it owes its allegiance. Things are getting worse because the towers of pomp are falling. Why should such falling towers worry those who seek their home in Heaven? It shouldn't. There is nothing to worry about!

Those who worry about the world are those who have invested too much of themselves in it. If we find ourselves becoming despondent because of the way things are going in the decomposing culture of death, it is because we have invested too much of our hope in the hopelessness of the situation. Hope is not to be found in hell, nor in those who owe their allegiance to it. In short, those who worry about the ways of the world are those who are too caught up in the world and its ways.

Let's remind ourselves of the words of Christ that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. If we treasure the world, believing the Devil's lie that we can make heaven on earth, we will lose our heart to the world and have our heart-broken on its broken promises. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and you will see that there's nothing to worry about!

There is, however, one other distinction that we need to make. There is a difference between the world and its worldliness, which is the kingdom that Satan offered Christ as one of the temptations in the wilderness, and the beauty and majesty of God's Creation, which is given to us as a candle in the darkness of the shadowlands of sin. The goodness, truth and beauty of the Trinity is to be seen in the goodness, truth and beauty of Creation. Look at the stars and see them as candles on the altar that the cosmos raises to its God. Look at a leaf and see it as the life that God breathes into all that He makes. Look at yourself

in the Mirror of the Gospel and see yourself as a son of God and a brother of Christ.

What would Jesus do if he walked amongst men in our own deplorable age? He would do what He has already done. He would reject the chance to rule the world when Satan tempted him with it, resisting the temptation to stop things from getting worse and to make them better. He would remind the one who tempted Him that we should first seek the Kingdom of God and that His Kingdom is not of this world. He would remind those few, those happy few, the band of brothers who followed Him, that as the world had hated Him, it would hate them. He would tell them that He had nothing to offer those who follow Him, this side of death, except the carrying of the Cross, though He promised that he would help them bear the burden.

The enduring immutable truth is that the Majority, the Mob, always crucifies Christ, hating Him and hating those who love Him. The price of loving Christ is being hated by the world. It is not only a small price to pay but is the pearl of great price for which we are meant to sell everything the world has to offer.

Yes, things are getting worse. There is little doubt that the world is going to hell. This should come as no surprise because it has always been going to hell. Only the fool follows it there.

The good news is that Christ has conquered the world as He has conquered the death that is found there. Things are getting worse. The towers of death are falling. Deo gratias!"

Joseph Pearce is a Senior Contributor at *The Imaginative Conservative*. He is writer in residence and director of the Center for Faith and Culture at Aquinas College in Nashville, Tennessee. His works include: *G.K. Chesterton: Wisdom and*

*Innocence, Literary Converts, Tolkien: Man and Myth, Solzhenitsyn: A Soul in Exile, The Quest for Shakespeare and Old Thunder: A Life of Hilaire Belloc.* He is the series editor of the Ignatius Critical Editions, and editor of the *St. Austin Review*. Mr. Pearce has hosted two television series for EWTN on Shakespeare's Catholicism.

Pearce's article is an interesting one. Would that we all could simply turn our backs on the horrible atrocities happening everywhere around us and concentrate only on our promised, heavenly goal. This grist for the news-mill keeps all the sins and bloodshed right smack in our faces, probably as it should be. We think the Lord would rather have us pray for those whose deadly sins are causing so much death and destruction among the innocent. Not that we condone such conduct or do not seek justice and just call for vengeance, but that behind all the terror, murder and mayhem are creatures of God not unlike ourselves— save for the gifts of the Spirit in the grace of of the Father through Jesus Christ. There will no doubt be reconciliation; but hopefully in many cases it will come about in this life through God's grace whose "will be done on earth as it is in heaven". So Lord... forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us and lead us not into temptation— but deliver us from evil. Thank you for the sacrament of Penance, belief in which secures us in your merciful love.

Sunday. Week 25th in ordinary time:

Gospel Acclamation Jn8:12

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;  
anyone who follows me will have the light of life.

Alleluia!

Gospel Mark 9:30-37

After leaving the mountain Jesus and his disciples made their way through Galilee; and he did not want anyone to know, because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, ‘The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again.’ But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him.

They came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, ‘What were you arguing about on the road?’ They said nothing because they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, ‘If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all.’ He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms round him, and said to them, ‘Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.’



(Peter's house under the modern church at Capernaum)