

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

If sin is the distortion, degradation and destruction of love, then the next two deadly sins illustrate this truth vividly. Lust is the degradation and distortion of love for another person. God has created us for love and created us to desire love—human love within the gift of marriage and family life, and divine love within the life of the church.

Lust is the sin that distorts and degrades and destroys marriage and family life. The church names some things as sins because they hurt people, and one of the biggest of Satan's lies is that the lustful sins do not hurt anybody. "Love is Love!" is the slogan, and that implies that love has no boundaries. However, love cannot be love *unless* it has boundaries. The sins of lust are therefore any sin that breaks or wounds the marriage bond. Adultery, pornography, masturbation, fornication, prostitution, human trafficking, child molestation—all these sins distort, degrade and destroy that fragile gift of marriage and family life.

We often think of Sloth as simple laziness, but the monastic writers who first meditated on the seven deadly sins understood sloth to be most of all, a kind of spiritual torpor—an unwillingness to make progress in the spiritual life—to give in to complacency and indifference. It is really a form of cowardice—unwillingness to recognize the urgency of the spiritual battle and to roll up our sleeves, get down on our knees and do battle with the devil for the good of our souls and the church and the world.

Sloth is going along to Mass with an attitude of polite conformity—doing just the minimum. Should the pastor ask for volunteers? Someone else will do it. Have you been invited to join the women's group? St. Vincent de Paul Society? The Knights of Columbus? The choir? The team of ushers? You can't be bothered. Someone else will do it. That's sloth.

The virtues that counter lust and sloth are chastity and duty. Remember chastity is to be distinguished from celibacy. Those who take a vow of celibacy refrain from all intimate relationships. Chastity, on the other hand, is a virtue all the baptized are called to. Chastity means faithfulness to the sacrament of marriage. Those who are married are chaste through faithfulness to their spouse. All who are unmarried are to be celibate. The virtue of duty means we get up and get involved according to our abilities and our state in life.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker