

Women, men experience sin differently, papal theologian says

VATICAN CITY – Of the seven deadly sins, men are more prone to be tempted by lust, while women more often succumb to the sin of pride, the papal theologian said.

In comments on a new book dedicated to St. Thomas Aquinas' teachings on the seven capital vices, Dominican Father Wojciech Giertych said men and women experience sin differently. His commentary was published Feb.16 by the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano.

Father Giertych, who is theologian of the papal household, said he agreed with the findings of St. Thomas Aquinas – a 13th-century Dominican theologian and philosopher – that men were more inclined than women to pursue pleasure.

“Often the most difficult (sin) men face is lust, and then comes gluttony, sloth, wrath, pride, envy, and greed,” wrote Father Giertych.

“For women, the most dangerous is pride, followed by envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and lastly, sloth,” he said.

The priest said personal experience seemed to confirm these theories.

“In convents, women religious are often envious of each other over little things, but when the church bell rings, everyone goes to the chapel to sing vespers,” he said.

“Monks, however, aren't often interested in each other and, therefore, aren't jealous, but when the church bell rings, few take part in common prayer,” he said.

He said St. Thomas Aquinas taught that pride is humanity's greatest enemy because it leads a person to believe he or she is self-sufficient and “hinders a person from having a relationship with God.”

Lust and “the sins against chastity are less dangerous because they are accompanied by a strong sense of humiliation and, as such, can be an occasion to return to God,” said Father Giertych.

However, lust and unchaste behavior “are dangerous from the point of view of their social consequences” or the complications they cause in one’s personal life, he said.

While some individuals and cultures may be more tempted to pursue power and wealth over pleasure, “human nature is always the same,” he said.

Everyone must make a personal examination of conscience in order to discover which vices are his or her greatest obstacles to receiving God’s grace, he said.

Because God is a merciful and loving father, people should not be afraid of his judgment, the papal theologian said. “His heart joyfully awaits the encounter” with someone who has sinned, he said.