

Century by Pope Gregory the Great: lust, gluttony, avarice, sloth, anger, envy, and pride. Asked what he believed were today's "new sins," Girotti told the Vatican newspaper that the greatest danger for the modern soul was to be found in the uncharted territory of bio-ethics.

"[T]here are areas where we absolutely must denounce some violations of the fundamental rights of human nature through experiments and genetic manipulation whose outcome is difficult to predict and control," he said.

The Vatican denounces stem cell research that involves use of embryos, and has warned against the prospect of human cloning.

The bishop -- in the interview headlined "New Forms of Social Sin" -- also said "ecological" offences were modern evils.

In recent months, Pope Benedict has made several strong pleas to world leaders for the protection of the environment, saying issues of pollution and climate change were gravely important for the entire human race.

Those with hell and damnation in store for them these days include polluters, drug pushers, the obscenely rich And scientists who manipulate human genes.

Under both Benedict and predecessor John Paul, the Vatican has become progressively "green."

Girotti -- who heads the Apostolic Penitentiary, the Vatican body which oversees confessions and grants absolution -- also mentioned drugs, which weaken the mind and obscure intelligence, as well as the widening social and economic differences between the rich and the poor that "cause an unbearable social injustice."

He said that priests must take account of "new sins which have appeared on the horizon of humanity as a corollary of the unstoppable process of globalisation."

Whereas sin in the past was thought of as a matter of invididual conscience, it now had "social resonance," said the bishop.

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