

The Wheel of Sevens [see p. 101 of *The Seven Sacraments*]

Not every pattern of seven in Scripture or tradition can be forced into a scheme that relates it to the seven sacraments. The attraction of the so-called “magic number” has always been immense, and lists of seven are commonplace. The most frequent use is simply as a mnemonic device, to enable information to be recalled more easily. In the twelfth century Hugh of St Victor wrote a book on the “Seven Septenaries” (*De quinque septens seu septenariis*), and the scheme he proposed there was later drawn in the form of a “Wheel of Sevens”. In the 1310 Psalter of Robert de Lisle (currently in the British Library), apparently based on Hugh’s work, each of the Petitions of the Lord’s Prayer is linked to one of the Sacraments of the Church, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Spiritual Weapons of the Virtues, the Corporeal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, and the Capital Virtues and Vices. The correlations are always not the same as the ones I have listed elsewhere in this book: the variations may serve as a salutary warning that the tradition is by no means uniform – and that the virtues in particular can be linked to the sacraments in a variety of ways.

1. <i>Pater Noster</i>	Baptism	Wisdom	Humility
	Clothe the naked <i>and</i> Pray for others	Prudence	Pride
2. <i>Adveniat</i>	Priesthood	Understanding	Generosity
	Feed the hungry <i>and</i> Convert the sinner	Fortitude	Greed
3. <i>Fiat</i>	Marriage	Counsel	Compassion
	Give drink to the thirsty <i>and</i> Instruct the ignorant	Justice	Envy
4. <i>Panem</i>	Eucharist	Fortitude	Meekness
	Visit the sick <i>and</i> Counsel the doubtful	Temperance	Anger
5. <i>Et dimitte</i>	Penance	Knowledge	Diligence
	Redeem captives <i>and</i> Comfort the sorrowful	Faith	Sloth
6. <i>Et ne nos</i>	Confirmation	Piety	Sobriety
	Welcome pilgrims <i>and</i> Bear wrongs patiently	Hope	Gluttony
7. <i>Sed libera</i>	Anointing	Fear	Chastity
	Bury the dead <i>and</i> Forgive injuries	Love	Lust

Here is the original Wheel of Sevens as seen in the British Library (translation above):



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