

A REASON FOR HOPE

A Catholic Faith Study for Inmates

PART THREE
Christian Morality

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Christian Morality

*“Always be ready
to give an explanation
to anyone who asks
you for a reason
for your hope.”*

1 Peter 3:15

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A REASON FOR HOPE

Faith Study Instructions

Part 3: Christian Morality

Part Three of the Faith Study contains:

- 1) *Introduction* to Christian Morality
- 2) *Study Sections* on Christian Morality
- 3) *Review Test* Pages

Begin the Study:

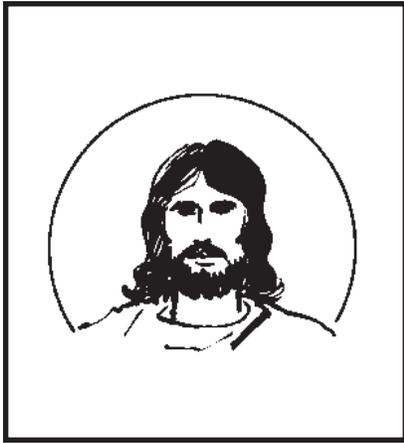
- Read each section on Christian Morality
- Do the “Review Test” for each section

Completing Part Three:

- Tear out carefully only the pages called “Review Test”
at the end of the study booklet after you have completed them.
- Review and correct these pages with your study coordinator.
- Receive a certificate of completion for the section of the Bible study you have completed.

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Our Call to Happiness

(Read more about this in the Catechism of the Catholic Church #.1691-1948)

With the *creed* we declare what we believe. With the *sacraments* we celebrate what we believe. And with Christian *morality* we live what we believe. In this third part of our series on the Catholic faith we are studying Christian *morality*. It is important to understand that this study does not begin with *rules* but with the *call to life* that comes to us from God. God has made a covenant of love with us (an agreement to love us forever). Our part of this covenant is to return God's love by keeping the commandments which not only honor God but also promote our own happiness.

There are two choices. One leads to spiritual life, the other to spiritual death, so it is important for us to make the right decision. The gospels tell us that following Christ is “...*the road that leads to life*” (*Matthew 7:14*). As St. Paul wrote, “...*to me life is Christ*” (*Philippians 1:21*). So Christ is the way and also the help we need on that way. If we ignore God's way we “*will certainly perish*” (*Deuteronomy 30:18*), not because God punishes us but because the consequences of our deeds can ruin our lives.

Therefore, this study begins and ends with Christ who is “*the way and the truth and the life*” (*John 14:6*). He is the perfect example of what it means to be a human being because he always lived in God's presence and did what pleased his Father (*John 8:29*). As amazing as it seems, Jesus also calls us to “*be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (*Matthew 5:48*). This call starts with our Baptism which makes us one with Christ. We become “*dead to sin and living for God*” (*Romans 6:11*) because we belong to Christ who rose from the dead. By following Christ we are imitating God as his children who “*live in love*” (*Ephesians 5:2*). This means that we try to follow his example—thinking, speaking and acting like Jesus. Even though we are human and make mistakes, through baptism and the grace of God we are “*called to be holy*” (*1 Corinthians 1:2*). Our body becomes a “*temple of the holy Spirit*” (*1 Corinthians 6:19*) who teaches us how to pray, shapes the way we live and gives us the courage to act with “*patience, kindness, generosity*” (*Galatians 5:22*). This same Spirit heals the wounds of our past sins, and changes us from the heart outward as we leave behind our “*former way of life*” (*Ephesians 4:22*). We have been rescued from the dark hole of selfishness and now live the light of God's love, “*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.*” (*Ephesians 5:8*).

As we keep our eyes of faith fixed on Jesus we cling to the hope that he will keep his promise and share eternal life with us. For our part we rely on God's grace to live in dignity as children of God and members of Christ's body: “*I have the strength for everything in him who empowers me*” (*Philippinans 4:13*).

Human Dignity

Because each one of us is created in God's image we have great dignity. The Creator has given us an eternal soul and wants us to be happy with Him forever. Because we also have the gift of reason (the power to think things through) we are able to understand the way God wants our life to be. Our free will gives us the ability to seek what is truly good. Because we have a soul, and the powers of our mind and will, we are blessed with freedom which makes us even more like God. Our ability to reason enables us to hear God's voice calling us to do good and stay away from evil. We hear this “*law*” in our own conscience. We follow this law by loving God and other human beings. This is how we live a good, moral life, and show respect for our own dignity and the dignity of others. In *Genesis* we learned that Adam and Eve abused this freedom at the very beginning of the human story. They also sinned against their own dignity when they disobeyed God. Sadly, human beings keep repeating this first (original) sin in every generation.

Our Call to Happiness

Our call to happiness is at the heart of the *beatitudes* as taught by Jesus (*Matthew* 5:3-12). (Beatitude comes from the Latin *beatus*, meaning blessed or happy). In them Jesus describes God's love for us and gives the ways we can be truly happy. The beatitudes give us hope and describe the happiness of following Christ even when it is difficult. The beatitudes speak to our deepest *desire* to be happy—a desire God put in our hearts to draw us to himself who alone can make us happy. That is why God put us on earth— to *know, love and serve him, and be with him forever in heaven*. Such happiness is beyond our human ability and understanding but it is God's free gift to us. This promise of happiness, however, challenges us to make moral choices. With the help of the Holy Spirit we can turn our hearts from what is bad and seek God's love above all else. After many mistakes and “dead ends” we learn—*there is no way but God's way*. It may take us a lifetime, but we gradually come to realize that riches, fame or power do not really satisfy us. Only God—the source of goodness and love—makes us happy.

Freedom and Responsibility

Because we have the ability to reason we are responsible for our actions. When God created the first human being he “*made him subject to his own free choice*” (*Sirach* 15:14). This freedom and power to choose is rooted in our reason and will. As long as freedom is not focused on what is truly good (that is *God*) it is possible for us to choose something that is evil instead of good. However, like a muscle that grows strong with use, the more we do what is good, the freer we become. The key to our freedom is realizing that we are truly free only when we do what is good. Whenever we choose to do evil we actually abuse our own freedom and become “*slaves of sin*” (*Romans* 6:17). Therefore, we are responsible for the choices we make and the things we cause or do. This is why God asked Adam and Eve after they sinned in the garden: “*Why did you do such a thing?*” (*Genesis* 3:13). This is also a question we can ask ourselves. Using our freedom does not mean we have the right to say or do whatever we want. It is a mistake to think that we live just for ourselves, that our only purpose is to satisfy our own needs and have material things.

Morality

Whatever we do is either good or bad (moral or immoral). It depends on three things: 1) what we choose (the *object*), 2) what we want to happen (the result or the *intention*), and 3) what else is going on (the *circumstances*). Our *object* is what we deliberately choose after deciding whether it is good or bad. Our *intention* focuses on our goal—what we expect to get or what will happen if we do it. We can do the same thing for either a good or a bad reason. For example, we can help someone because they need help or because we want to get the glory for it. The *circumstances* (whether past, present or future) can add to or take away from how good or bad our act is. This also includes the consequences or results of what we do. Our guilt is sometimes lessened or removed if we were *ignorant* or *did not understand*, were *under great stress or fear*, or *had psychological or social problems*. An example would be if someone is threatening to kill us. However, if an action is evil in itself no circumstances or intentions will make it right. Some acts are always seriously wrong because of what they target or what they are connected to. Examples of acts that are always seriously wrong are: *adultery, blasphemy, murder and perjury*. The moral law teaches us that *we cannot do something bad so that something good will come of it*. Spiritual advice and confession can help us understand our responsibility for our sins.

Conscience

Deep within us we have a law written on our hearts by God himself. It is like a voice that calls us to do what is good and avoid evil. It is called our *conscience*. This spiritual core of each person is a sacred

place where we stand alone before God. As St. Augustine taught, “*In everything you do, see God as your witness.*” The challenge for each of us is to be present to ourselves so that we can hear and follow our conscience. We need time to focus on this, even though everyday life can distract us from examining ourselves. Actually, our conscience is a true friend because it helps us take responsibility for what we have done. It also is the most *basic human right* to act according to our own conscience and to live by this freedom. We should never be forced to go against our conscience. We must always obey our conscience because deliberately acting against it is to convict ourselves. Nevertheless, we may not have all the facts and it is possible that what we decide is not correct. Forming our conscience is a lifelong job, but it is worth it because it gives us inner freedom and peace of heart. Whenever we have difficult decisions to make we need the advice of people we respect and trust, the teachings of the Church and God’s Word to guide us. Our decision may even cause us to suffer for the sake of Christ, but the Holy Spirit is always with us to help us with God’s *grace*.

Sin and Grace

Although we want what is good we still tend to repeat Adam and Eve’s sin. That is why we make mistakes and feel divided within ourselves. Yet we have hope and God’s help as the apostle Paul taught: “*Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more*” (Romans 5:20). Our lives, as individuals or as a group, are a real struggle between good and evil. As someone has said, “Sin is always just around the corner.” Some sins are more serious than others. Sins that are not so serious are called *venial* sins. We may be impatient, bend the truth a little, fail to respect another, or steal something small. These things weaken our friendship with God and others, but they do not end it. The more serious sins are called *mortal* sins because they “kill” our relationship with God and others. Jesus gave examples of mortal sin in *Matthew 15:19*: “...*murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy.*” For a sin to be mortal *three things* must be present: 1) it must be *serious*, 2) we must *know* that it is serious, and 3) we must *consent* to it. If one of these is missing we are not guilty of a mortal sin.

Although sin is personal (meaning “I” am responsible for it) we also can sin with others. We do this when we give them an order, advice or approval to do something evil; when we do not make it known or try to stop others when we should; when we protect those who are doing something wrong. In this way sin is also social because it touches others’ lives. Because we are members of society, we sometimes share in the violence and injustice done to a person or an entire group. All our sins together create a *social sin*—situations and institutions that are contrary to God’s plan. By learning to live together, talk with one another and treat others as ourselves, we live up to our dignity as human beings. When we sin we not only fail to love God and our fellow human beings but even ourselves. We act as if we do not need God or his grace. Our pride puts us and our needs at the center of everything, yet that place belongs only to God. Only with God’s help can we begin to love others as ourselves or as Christ loves them: “ ‘...*whatever you did for one of these...you did for me*’ ” (Matthew 25:40).

The Commandments

Our study of the Ten Commandments (or *decalogue* which is Greek for *ten words*) begins with Moses and the Israelites, gathered in the desert at Mount Sinai after escaping from slavery in Egypt. Their story represents for people of all times and places how God also frees them from the *slavery of sin*.

“ ‘*Therefore, if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people, though all the earth is mine. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation*’ ” (Exodus 19:5-6).

With these words God reminds Moses how he gave his people their freedom. He will be their God and they will be his chosen people so He offers them a covenant of love. The Bible compares this covenant

to a marriage because God and his people make their vows to one other. By giving the Israelites the commandments, God offers them a simple way to show their love by keeping their promise to obey God.

The Catholic Church teaches that the Ten Commandments also can be discovered in the *natural* law. This means that human beings could have discovered them by using their own mental powers (or reason) and by searching their hearts. In fact, there were many codes and laws that guided how people behaved in the ancient world as well as during the time of Christ. But the Ten Commandments were revealed by God in a special way. As hard as they are to keep at times, God gives us the grace to follow these “laws of love” because they honor God and are meant to make us truly happy:

“Be careful, therefore, to do as the LORD, your God, has commanded you, not turning aside to the right or to the left, but following exactly the way prescribed for you by the LORD, your God, that you may live and prosper...” (Deuteronomy 5:32-33).

Although they are laws, the commandments also are wonderful proofs of God’s love and care for us. In them God shows us a sure path to life and happiness. It is important to remember that although God commands us to keep these laws, he also gives us the grace to live by them. According to the tradition of the Catholic Church the list of the Ten Commandments follows *Deuteronomy 5:6-21*:

‘I, the LORD, am your God...You shall not have other gods besides me’ (v. 6-7).

‘You shall not take the name of the LORD, your God, in vain’ (v. 11).

‘Take care to keep holy the sabbath day...’ (v. 12).

‘Honor your father and your mother...’ (v. 16).

‘You shall not kill’ (v. 17).

‘You shall not commit adultery’ (v. 18).

‘You shall not steal’ (v. 19).

‘You shall not bear dishonest witness against your neighbor’ (v. 20).

‘You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife’ (v. 21).

‘You shall not desire...anything that belongs to him’ ” (v. 21).

After Moses listed all the commandments he went on to say:

“These words, and nothing more, the LORD spoke with a loud voice to your entire assembly on the mountain from the midst of fire and the dense cloud. He wrote them upon two tablets of stone and gave them to me” (Deuteronomy 5:22).

As we study the Ten Commandments we will see the following:

- the *first three* deal with how human beings behave toward God. They teach us that there is only one true God, to honor his name, to reject false gods and set aside the Sabbath as a day for God,
- the other *seven* deal with how we should behave toward one another. We are taught to honor and obey our parents as well as other people in authority, not to kill one another and to respect all life, not to take what belongs to others, to be faithful to our spouses, to speak truthfully about one another, and not to be overcome by the desire for another person’s spouse or the things that belong them.

It is important to realize that even though we may keep the commandments this does not guarantee that we will find *earthly* happiness in this life—that we will be healthy, rich, or powerful. Christ has promised *heavenly* happiness to those who follow him. There is a cost with being his disciple. That is why he challenges us to *deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him.* (*Matthew 16:24-27*). The truth is, if we follow Jesus as our only master we will be happy and free.



The First Commandment

(Read more in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2084-2141).

“I, the LORD, am your God...You shall not have other gods besides me” (Exodus 20:2-3).

A. The Worship of One God.

Our worship of God is based on two things: *who God is*, and *who we are*.

Who Is God?

The One we worship is *“...God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth;...” (Genesis 14:19)*. We did not make ourselves. We exist because of our Creator. The Bible reminds us of who God is by recalling all the powerful and loving things he has done for the happiness and freedom of his people. For the ancient Israelites and for us today, God is the one who rescues us *“...out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery” (Exodus 20:2)*. God is there to rescue us each and every day. We owe God our love and gratitude.

We believe that God is the only One who is always the same. His love for us never changes. He is our true and faithful Friend even if all others betray us. He is totally good, there is nothing in him that is evil. That is why we can accept what he tells us and trust him completely. God has been so good to us and loves us so much. God truly deserves our love and loyalty. That is why this commandment begins with the words: *“I, the LORD” (Exodus 20:2)*.

Who Are We?

“What are humans that you are mindful of them, mere mortals that you care for them?” (Psalm 8:5).

When God reveals who He is, we discover who we truly are—*we are God’s children*. Who we are and what we are called to do (our vocation from the Latin *vocare*, to call) is linked to God. Therefore, we will not find the answer to our identity anywhere else but in God. We may be called to be a spouse, a parent, or have a special talent, but beyond all that we have been created in *“the divine image” (Genesis 1:27)*. This helps us realize that when we sin, we not only turn against God, but also turn against our own dignity. It is as if in the beginning of our lives God gave each of us a picture of ourselves to remind us of our goodness and beauty. But when we sin, we disrespect our own image by throwing mud on it.

The truth is—we did not always exist. We and the universe we live in were made by God. We are alive not because of ourselves but only by God’s power. As the Bible says of God, *“You alone are God” (Psalm 86:10)*. Therefore, as God’s creatures we are happiest when we are giving God our total *faith, hope and love*.

FAITH

The foundation of our faith in God is God himself. God is the reason we are alive. He *“...calls into being what does not exist” (Romans 4:17)*. God also calls us to believe in him and to make him known to others. We must keep watch over our faith. Like a plant that needs food and water, we must nourish and protect it. Whether we are faithful to God or not, God is always faithful to us, calling us back and strengthening us, *“Call to me, and I will answer you;...” (Jeremiah 33:3)*. For our part, we must turn away from whatever might weaken or destroy our faith. The following are some ways that we might sin against this commandment:

- Neglecting the truth that God has revealed
- Refusing to agree with the truth

The Church has special names for sins against this commandment: *Heresy* means that even after we have been baptized we do not believe one or more truths which the Church teaches as revealed by God. We stubbornly deny the truth that we have promised to believe. *Apostasy* means we totally reject the Christian faith we once accepted. *Schism* means we refuse to accept the pope as the head of the Church, or refuse to live in unity with the other members of the Church.

We sin by *doubt* when we deliberately refuse to accept the truth that God exists, or the truth God has revealed, or the faith that the Church teaches. This is not the same as *involuntary* doubt, when we hesitate to believe, or when it is hard for us to overcome arguments against our faith, or are anxious because our faith is difficult to understand. As human beings we work through our doubts so that we can *see as God sees*.

HOPE

Our only hope is in God “...*from whom comes my hope*” (*Psalm 62:6*). When God reveals himself to us, we are not able to respond on our own. God gives us the ability to love Him in return and to live by his commandments. Hope means we are afraid of offending God’s love and suffering the consequences of our sins. Through hope we look forward to God’s blessing and to seeing God in heaven one day. The Church calls this the *beatific vision*—the happiness of finally seeing God face to face.

There are two serious sins against hope: *despair* and *presumption*. Despair means we have given up all hope of being saved by God. We have convinced ourselves that God will never forgive us. Such despair actually denies God’s goodness and mercy. There are two kinds of presumption: 1) we rely on our own ability, thinking we can save ourselves without God’s help, or 2) we expect God’s mercy and forgiveness without a change of heart or behavior. But the Bible says, “*One cannot redeem oneself...*” (*Psalm 49: 8*).

LOVE

God’s love is so great that it brought forth all life out of his overflowing goodness. Therefore, we are called to praise and thank God for the gift of life and to love God in return. This first commandment reminds us to love God above all, and to love everything and everyone as God loves them. Moses reminded the people who gathered to hear the commandments:

“*Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength*” (*Deuteronomy 6:5*).

Although God is worthy of our love, there are ways that we can sin against God’s love. We can be:

- 1) *indifferent* - we neglect or refuse to think about God’s love and goodness, or admit God’s power,
- 2) *ungrateful* - we fail or refuse to appreciate God’s love and to love God in return,
- 3) *lukewarm* - we are slow to respond to God’s love or even neglect it completely; we may be afraid of love and its responsibilities,
- 4) *spiritually lazy* - we refuse the joy God wishes to give us, and push away God’s goodness,
- 5) *hateful of God* - we are so filled with pride that we refuse to admit God’s goodness, or admit that God has the power to remind us of our sins and their consequences.

B. The Service of God Alone

The first thing religion calls us to do is *adore* God. God is the only One who lives from all eternity, and shares eternal life with us. Therefore it is our duty to recognize God as our Creator and Savior whose love is infinite and merciful.

“This is why you must now know, and fix in your heart, that the LORD is God in the heavens above and on earth below, and that there is no other” (Deuteronomy 4:39). This commandment reminds us that we were made for God: *“...none beside you delights me on earth” (Psalm 73:25).*

To adore God means that we understand, with reverence and humility, our “nothingness” as a creature. This does not mean we have no value. On the contrary we have great value as God’s creation. It simply means that we admit the fact that we do not exist without God. To adore God means that we joyfully praise him and humble ourselves before *“... the greatness of the Lord” (Luke 1:46).* Worship of God actually sets us free because we no longer see ourselves as the center of everything. It keeps us from being enslaved by sin and “adoring” what the world has to offer.

Prayer

Prayer is absolutely necessary if we are going to be able to keep God’s commandments. In fact, our prayers of *faith, hope and love* are the way we carry out the first commandment. For us as Christians praying should be as natural as breathing. In the spirit of this commandment we should give God *“...glory every day” (Psalm 71:8).* As we raise our minds and hearts to God we can use one or all four kinds of prayer: 1) *praise*, 2) *thanksgiving*, 3) *intercession (praying for others)* and 4) *petition (asking for something)*. Prayer gives us strength as we struggle between good and evil within ourselves or in the world around us. That is why Jesus taught his followers *“...about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary” (Luke 18:1).*

Sacrifice

When we offer a sacrifice to God it is a very special kind of prayer. We take something that we have or hold as valuable and give it to God because God alone is worthy of our total devotion and obedience. Our sacrifice connects us with God in four special ways: we *adore* him, we *thank* him, we *ask him for help*, and we *share* with him. St. Augustine taught that every action can be a sacrifice. It can be done in such a way that it brings us closer to God’s holiness and helps us achieve spiritual happiness. However, if something is going to be a true sacrifice it must come from the heart. God never wants us to offer something without a humble heart. As the Bible says: *“My sacrifice, God, is a broken spirit;...” (Psalm 51:19).* The Old Testament prophets spoke out against sacrifices that were not from the heart or gave no attention to the needs of others (*Amos 5:21, Isaiah 1:10-20*). In *Matthew 9:13* Jesus explained what God wanted from his people: *“For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6).* The greatest sacrifice of all time is the one that Jesus offered on Calvary: *“But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sin by his sacrifice” (Hebrews 9:26).* He offered himself completely out of love for the Father and us in order to save us. Our lives also become a living sacrifice to God when we carry our own cross and follow Jesus Christ.

C. No Other Gods

The first commandment calls us to 1) *worship the one true God*, and 2) *reject false gods*.

The worship of false gods actually can take several forms. Here are some of them:

Superstition

Superstition is like a twisted religion. It uses our religious feelings to create fear or misunderstanding of the spiritual world. It does not lead us to love and trust God. It tells us that if we simply go through the motions of rituals or chants, that we can bring about what we want. But rituals have no power of their own, nor do they give us power. As Christians we must be careful to participate in the sacraments with a loving heart and a spirit of faith in God.

Idolatry

Idolatry is wrong because we settle for what is empty and fake, not the real thing. As St. Paul wrote

they: “...exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of an image...” (Romans 1:23). The ancient prophet Isaiah also warned the person who sacrificed to a man-made idol: “ *He is chasing ashes—a thing that cannot save itself...*” (Isaiah 44: 20). Idolatry means we put something in God’s place. This can include Satan, demons, power, race, the state, drugs, sex or money. This is what Jesus meant when he said, “*You cannot serve God and mammon*” (Matthew 6:24). (Mammon is the love of money more than anything else). When we worship an idol we end up feeling empty because the idol itself is lifeless and cannot give life. As another prophet said: “...*there is no life breath in it*” (Habukuk 2:19). See also *Ephesians* 5:5. Our attitudes and addictions draw us into idolatry because they replace God. They take all the joy out of our lives. The first commandment is God’s cure for this human sickness: “*Let the peace of Christ control your hearts...*” (Colossians 3: 15). Nothing or no one deserves to be treated as God’s equal or as more important than God. As Jesus told Satan who tested him in the desert:

“*Get away Satan! It is written:
The Lord, your God, shall you worship
and him alone shall you serve*” (Matthew 4: 10).

Worship of God alone is also good for us as human beings. We are “wired” to worship. It helps us center ourselves on God and keeps our lives from falling apart or spinning out of control. That is why idolatry is a twisted version of our human need to worship. A formula to remember is: *whenever anything becomes more important than God, or is more valued than people, it is idolatry.*

Divination, Magic and Spiritism

Although God sometimes reveals the future to prophets or saints, as Christians we should leave the future in God’s hands. It can be unhealthy for us to be always worried about the future. As a result we will not truly live in the present, or may even forget about our responsibilities. Here is sound advice from a great saint: “*Have no fear for what tomorrow may bring. The same loving God who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. God will either shield you from suffering or give you the unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations*” (St. Francis de Sales). As Christians we should also reject all kinds of *divination*. This means calling on Satan , demons or the dead, trying to “reveal” the future by consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, explaining omens or consulting mediums. Such actions offend our human freedom because they try to gain power over time, situations or other people. They also offend God because God alone oversees the future and our lives. *Magic or sorcery* (even when trying to heal sickness) is against true religion because it pretends to use hidden powers in order to have supernatural control over others. It is even worse when it is used to harm someone, or when demons are called on for help. When “traditional” cures call on evil spirits or abuse someone’s faith they are wrong.

Sacrilege: People commit a sacrilege when they disrespect the persons, places and things consecrated to God, including the sacraments and other sacred actions such as the Sign of the Cross.

Atheism: People who are atheists reject or deny God’s existence. They may have a false idea of human freedom that has no need for God. As Christians we must give a good example, so that we help atheists see the truth about God and his infinite love.

Agnosticism: Agnostics do not deny that God exists. They just do not believe that God is able to reveal himself or that anything can be known about God.

Images - Sometimes Catholics are accused of adoring statues or pictures, but the answer is simple: we honor the images of Jesus, Mary and the saints in the same way we honor pictures of our loved ones. Catholics also believe that only God is worthy of adoration.



The Second Commandment

(Read more in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2142-2167).

*“You shall not take the name of the LORD, your God, in vain”
(Exodus 20:7).*

A. GOD’S NAME IS HOLY.

The second commandment *calls us to have respect for God’s name.* Like the first commandment, it guides us in the practice of true religion. It does this by shedding light on the way we should speak about God and the things that are sacred.

Of all the names we learn in the Bible there is one that is truly unique. It is God’s own revealed name: *“I am who am”* (Exodus 3: 14). It is the name God spoke from the burning bush when Moses asked who is sending him to free his people: *“What am I to tell them?”* (Exodus 3: 13). Until that moment in all of human history, no one ever knew this secret name of God. Like God, every human being is a personal mystery. And we only let others know who we are if we trust them. When we tell someone our name we trust them and allow them to know more about us. What God has done is to allow us to know more about himself. This is why we must not abuse God’s name but honor it. Whenever we speak about God it should be with gratitude and respect:

*“Give thanks to the LORD, invoke his name;
make known among the peoples his deeds!”* (Psalm 105:1).

This reverence that we owe to God—the sense of sacred mystery—is the heart of religion. It springs from *faith* and means keeping our minds and hearts open to what is real. If we believe God is present, we see that moment or what is happening as sacred: *“...we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen;...”* (2 Corinthians 4:18). For those who do not believe God is present, it seems as if nothing is happening.

As baptized Christians we should not be afraid to give witness to God’s name or to our faith in God. Any time we are called on to speak about what we believe, our attitude toward the name of God and his Son, Jesus Christ should be one of deep respect: *“...how awesome is your name through all the earth”* (Psalm 8:2).

The second commandment does not forbid us to use God’s name. It forbids us to abuse it in any way. This commandment also includes all the names of God, as well as Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and the things of the church like the sacraments. Here are some ways we might abuse what is holy:

Promises – When we fail to keep promises made in God’s name we misuse his name and dishonor God. We often hear people say: “I swear to God” or “I swear on the Bible” when they don’t mean it.

Blasphemy – We blaspheme when we speak directly to God with hatred or arrogance; or when we say bad things about God; or disrespect God or God’s name. This also includes the Church, saints and sacred things. Sometimes people do evil things “in God’s name.” They commit crimes, make slaves of others, torture people or even put them to death. Besides bringing harm to human beings it also turns people against God.

Oaths – We fail to respect God when we take an oath in his name and then lie (or perjure ourselves). It also is wrong to use God’s name for unimportant oaths. Regarding oaths Jesus taught: *“But I say to you,*

do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool;...Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one" (Matthew 5: 34-37).

B. HONORING GOD'S NAME

All truth flows from God like a spring from its source. Therefore, when we speak the truth we are in harmony with God who is Truth itself: *"I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14: 6).*

False Oaths – When we make an oath and say “God is my witness” we call on God to testify that we are honest and can be trusted. That is why we must refuse to make false oaths. False oaths are ones we do not intend to keep. Good, lawful oaths (such as those in court) connect what we say to God's truth. However, false oaths are wrong because they ask God to become a witness to a lie.

Perjury – We “perjure ourselves” when we fail to tell the truth under oath. This is serious disrespect for God: *“...Lord GOD, you are God and your words are truth” (2 Samuel 7:28).* For the same reason we must never promise to do something evil by using God's holy name.

Because God's name is holy we must refuse to take an oath, even when the government orders it, if it goes against the dignity of persons, the commandments or the laws of the Church.

C. OUR CHRISTIAN NAME

We are baptized “in the *name* of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” God's name makes us holy, and at baptism we receive our name in the Church. Sometimes it is the name of a holy person from the Bible or a Christian saint who is an example of faithfulness to God. Or we can be named after a Christian value like faith, hope or charity.

God remembers and knows each creature by name. Like the stars, everyone's name is written in the heart of the Creator. As the Bible tells us, God...

*“...Numbers all the stars,
calls each of them by name” (Psalm 147:4).*

Because we are children of God, every person's name deserves respect and dignity because our names represent us.

The name we have from Baptism belongs to us forever. When God's kingdom finally comes, Jesus *“...will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him” (Matthew 25:31-32).* Then each of us will be called by Christ to be part of that glory: *“Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).* In the last book of the Bible Jesus promises the one who has been faithful to the gospel: *“...I will never erase his name from the book of life but will acknowledge his name in the presence of my Father and of his angels” (Revelation 3:5).*

The Israelites knew God's name revealed to Moses in the burning bush, *“... 'I am who am' ” (Exodus 3:14).* In Hebrew this was *Yahweh*. They respected this name so much that only the high priest would speak it only once a year in the temple. In the Old Testament the large letters “*LORD*” are used in place of *Yahweh*. The following are a few of the many passages in the Bible about God's name:

“Those who honor your name trust in you;

you never forsake those who seek you, LORD” (Psalm 9:11).

“...revere the glorious and awesome name of the LORD, your God,...” (Deuteronomy 28:58).

*“Let them all praise the LORD’s name;
for the LORD commanded and they were created” (Psalm 148:5).*

*“Every day I will bless you;
I will praise your name forever” (Psalm 145:2).*

As Catholics, when we make the sign of the cross on ourselves we are recalling the death of Jesus and our baptism. We say: *“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”* This ancient prayer to the Trinity was used by early Christians, according to Tertullian (160-230 A.D.). It reminds us that we have been saved by the *Father*, through the death of his *Son Jesus*, and the outpouring of the *Holy Spirit*.

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught his followers to honor the name of God,

*“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,...” (Matthew 6:9).*

As the good shepherd, Jesus calls each of his followers by name:

“...the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them...” (John 10:3).

D. A SPECIAL NAME

Looking at the ordinary ways that we use names helps us understand our spiritual lives, too. When we introduce ourselves we tell the other person our name. It is a the first step toward getting to know us. If we know someone’s name it allows us to get their attention. They turn toward us when we say their name. We call out someone’s name when we need help. When humanity needed to be saved, God gave us the name of *Jesus Christ*:

“ ‘There is no salvation though anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved’ ” (Acts 4:12).

*“Because of this, God greatly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,...” (Philippians 2:9-10).*

“ And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:17).

Jesus also taught us a special name for God. He brought humanity closer to God than ever before by inviting us to call him *Abba*. This means *papa or daddy* in Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus. Toward the end of his life, during the last supper, Jesus prayed to his Father: *“I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world” (John 17:6).* This is why we Christians have a new understanding of God. Instead of an awesome, unspeakable name for God, we have *Abba*, a very personal name that we use as members of God’s family. No other religion on earth speaks to God in this personal way.

The followers of Jesus called him “*Lord*” both as a title of respect and as one equal to God. In some ways it was like our title “sir.” However, after his death the first Christians began using this title in the same way that the Jews used LORD when referring to God:

“ ‘...*this is my title for all generations*’ ” (*Exodus 3:15*).

In the spirit of this commandment let us praise the name of God:

“*May his name be blessed forever;
as long as the sun, may his name endure*” (*Psalm 72:17*).



*The LORD supports all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down” Psalm 145:14).*



The Third Commandment

(Read more in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2168-2195).

“Remember to keep holy the sabbath day” (Exodus 20:8).

A. THE SABBATH IS HOLY

The third commandment reminds us of the holiness of the sabbath: *“Six days there are for doing work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of complete rest, sacred to the LORD” (Exodus 31:15).*

In the story of creation we read how God rested: *“So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation” (Genesis 2:3).*

The sabbath also was linked to the passover and the escape of the Israelites from Egypt. The people were commanded to rest on that day and recall how God freed them from slavery: *“For remember that you too were once slaves in Egypt, and the LORD, your God, brought you from there with his strong hand and outstretched arm. That is why the LORD, your God, has commanded you to observe the sabbath day” (Deuteronomy 5:15).*

Israel set aside the sabbath as a sign of their everlasting covenant with God. The sabbath belongs to God and is called the “Lord’s day.” It has been set apart for praising God, reflecting on the wonder of his creation and all that God does to save his people.

But when God rested he also gave human beings an example. Since God rested we who are made in God’s image should rest too. We are children who imitate our Father. We also should take care that others are able to rest too. By putting work aside, it is a good reminder that work and earning money are not the most important things we do. We need to balance our everyday lives by finding our greatest joy in the spiritual life:

*“If you hold back your foot on the sabbath
from following your own pursuits on my holy day;
If you call the sabbath a delight,
and the LORD’s holy day honorable;
If you honor it by not following your ways,
seeking your own interests, or speaking with malice—
Then you shall delight in the LORD...” (Isaiah 58:13-14).*

The enemies of Jesus often watched him and his followers closely to see if they were keeping the sabbath holy. One day Jesus and his disciples were walking through a field of wheat. When they picked and ate a few grains the Pharisees said: *“See, your disciples are doing what is unlawful to do on the sabbath” (Matthew 12:2).* But Jesus had a deep respect sabbath holiness. As *Luke 4:16* states he *“...went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day.”* Another time his enemies tried to trap him with the question: *“Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?” (Matthew 12:10).* Jesus told them: *“...it is lawful to do good on the sabbath” (Matthew 12:12)* and then cured a man with a withered hand right before their eyes. Jesus understood the deeper meaning of the sabbath: *“The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27).* He taught that the sabbath was not just a day of rules about doing

nothing. It was a time to honor and praise God by doing good and showing mercy to others (*Mark* 3:4 and *Matthew* 12:5). Jesus challenged the attitude of his enemies with a question of his own: “...are you angry with me because I made a whole person well on a sabbath?” (*John* 7:23).

B. SUNDAY AS THE LORD’S DAY

For the early Christians, Sunday replaced the sabbath because it was the day of Christ’s resurrection. This day—unlike any other day in human history—truly fulfills the spirit of the sabbath. We understand *Psalm* 118:24 in a completely new way:

*“This is the day the LORD has made;
let us rejoice in it and be glad.”*

Each one of the gospels agree that Jesus rose from the dead, “*After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning...*” (*Matthew* 28:1) See also: *Mark* 16:2, *Luke* 24:1, *John* 20:1. The Church also regards this “first day” of Christ’s Resurrection as the first day of the new creation. For us as Christians Sunday has become the *Lord’s day*.

St Justin, who was an early Christian martyr and great Church teacher, explained why Sunday was the Lord’s day in his book *The Apology*. This title does not mean he was apologizing for the Christian faith. He was giving an *explanation* of it to the pagans of his day: “*We all gather on the day of the sun, for it is the first day (after the Jewish sabbath, but also the first day) when God, separating matter from darkness, made the world; and on this same day Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead.*”

Like the Israelites, we Christians also recall our own passover. Through Christ’s *passion, death and resurrection* (which the Church calls his *Passover*) we have passed from the slavery of sin to the freedom of God’s mercy. According to the author of *Hebrews* the worship of the Old Testament paved the way for the new worship of Christ: “*Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of them...*” (*Hebrews* 10:1). According to this same author Christ opened for us “*...the new and living way...*” of approaching God (*Hebrews* 10:20).

St. Ignatius of Antioch who was martyred in the year 107 A.D. wrote: “*Those who lived according to the old order of things have come to a new hope, no longer keeping the sabbath, but the Lord’s Day, in which our life is blessed by him and by his death.*”

As we gather for Sunday worship we Christians also are faithful to the commandment to keep the Lord’s day holy.

Sunday Eucharist

Gathering to celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday is at the heart of the Catholic community’s life. The practice of Christians gathering for worship began during the time of the apostles: “*They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers*” (*Acts* 2:42). Church law (which is listed by sections called *canons*) states: “*Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost day of obligation in the universal Church*” (*Canon* 1246,1). The Church also requires Catholics to honor several “holy days of obligation.” This means that U.S. Catholics are obliged to attend Mass just as we do on Sundays. U.S. Catholics keep these special days: *Christmas (December 25)*, *the Ascension of Christ, Mary the Mother of God (January 1)*, *Mary’s Immaculate Conception (December 8)*, *Mary’s Assumption (August 15)* and finally, *the feast of All Saints (November 1)*. The U.S. Catholic bishops can set aside some of them or change them to a Sunday with the approval of the Pope.

The holy days of obligation are not the same in every part of the world. Other days of obligation outside the United States are: the Epiphany, the Body and Blood of Christ, the feast of St. Joseph, and the feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

The Parish Church

The word *parish* has several uses. It comes from the Greek word *paroikos*, which means *living next to one another*. That is why in Louisiana it describes a county. In the Catholic Church it describes the local faith community. Its Christian members are guided by a pastor (Latin for *shepherd*). They usually gather in a building that also is called a *church*. (Catholics also are allowed to celebrate Mass in other places for special occasions or when no church building is available). They take part in the sacraments together, learn about the faith and help those in need. Therefore, the word *church* has different meanings: it is the place where Christians gather, it is also the name given to the entire group of Christians, as the Bible says: “...to the church of the Thessalonians...” (*1 Thessalonians* 1:1). So the church is not just a building. The truth is: *all together we are the church*—lay people, monks, nuns, priests, bishops and the pope with Christ as our head.

Although we can pray alone or in a group wherever we are, it is especially important to celebrate the Eucharist with fellow Catholics on Sundays and holy days. That is how we link up with the entire Church. St. John Chrysostom taught that Sunday worship is “...where prayers are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the harmony of souls, the bond of love, the prayers of the priests.” Gathering to pray shows that we belong to Christ and are faithful to his Church. Our unity of love honors the Father, and with the help of the Holy Spirit we our faith and hope of salvation grow stronger.

Church law is clear about keeping this commandment: “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass” (Canon 1247). Because the Eucharist is the *source and summit* of Christian life, we must participate in it on Sundays and days of obligation—unless we are excused for a serious reason. This duty can be fulfilled “either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day.” (Canon 1248). The Church understands that some Catholics cannot worship on Sunday because of danger, distance from a church, work they must do or because they are in prison.

People in prison are excused because of their circumstances. However, inmates sometimes join together to form what is called a “*small faith community*.” This is a group of Catholic inmates who get together to pray as a group on a regular basis. They also read and study the teachings of the Catholic Church and the Bible. They do whatever they can to support their Catholic faith behind bars. Some groups try to pray the “Liturgy of the Hours.” This is the official daily prayer of the Catholic Church which combines the psalms, readings and hymns. It is a prayer used by priests, monks, nuns and even some lay people.

If there is no good excuse, Catholics who do not fulfill the obligation of this commandment commit a serious sin. When no priest is available: “It is specially recommended that the faithful take part in the Liturgy of the Word, or engage in prayer for an appropriate amount of time personally or in a family or, as occasion offers, in groups...” (Canon 1248,2).

Sunday Rest

Like God who “...was finished with the work he had been doing...” (*Genesis* 2:2) our human lives also need a balance of work and rest. The Lord’s Day is also a wonderful gift to us from God who loves and cares for us. It gives us time to celebrate God’s love and mercy together. It also provides us with time to relax and enjoy our loved ones, friends and our community life. After a time of rest, we can return to our every day duties feeling renewed in body, mind and spirit. This great tradition is a gift we have received from our Jewish ancestors in faith. Sunday is an excellent day for doing good and serving the sick, peo-

ple with disabilities, and the elderly, or, to make time for our families, relatives and friends. We can give attention to those we love if we have been too busy during the rest of the week. Sunday is a good time to reflect, be silent for awhile and meditate on the Bible and other good spiritual books. This helps our spiritual growth as Christians. It is understandable that those who are involved in serving the Church have a spiritual work to do on Sundays and holy days. Priests, deacons, Eucharistic ministers and choir members all do their part in providing worship services for the faith community. Many bring the Eucharist to the sick and dying at home and in hospitals, while others prepare meals for the homeless and visit the elderly and people with disabilities.

Keeping Sundays and holy days holy sometimes takes an effort. We should try not to make it hard for others to observe the Lord's day. It is also a good time to keep in prayer those who can't rest from work because they are poor and struggling to make a living. Although activities such as sports, entertainment or public gatherings mean some people have to work on Sundays, everyone should set aside time to relax. We definitely should avoid eating and drinking too much, or any violence that sometimes happens at events or gatherings.

Out of respect for religious freedom we should try to get the government to recognize Sundays and holy days as official days off from work. It is an opportunity for us to give an example of prayer and respect for God, and to defend our spiritual traditions. They are a valuable contribution to the spiritual life of society. Employers and public authorities should try to give everyone time for rest and worship—even if it doesn't make any money. If we must work on Sunday, we should still keep it *in spirit* as the day of our salvation. We also should support the other faith traditions who set aside different days, such as Fridays for Muslims and Saturdays for Jews.

No More Wall

I have lived my life surrounded by walls.
Tear down at least this one wall
that separates me from you, my God—
the wall that I have made trying to keep you out.
For I have been afraid of you, God,
afraid of your truth.
I have tried to hide my faults even from myself.
But you know me—you see through my wall.
You look at me with your eyes of love,
You forgive me inspite of everything I have ever done.

This I believe—
this is the crack in my wall,
that you love me with an everlasting love
and that you forgive me.

Let there be no wall between us, God.
This is my salvation—that *I believe in you*.
I believe in your love for me.
I believe that you have already forgiven me
even before I knew it or forgave myself.

“Blessed are you who believed ...” (Luke 1:45).



“Am I not your mother?” Mary to Juan Diego

The Fourth Commandment

(Read more in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2197-2257).

“Honor your father and your mother,...” (Exodus 20:12).

The fourth commandment introduces us to the second part of the Ten Commandments. The first part focused on love and respect for God. This second part focuses on how to love and respect our fellow human beings.

God’s plan was that our parents should give us life and teach us about God. That is why God intended that we honor and respect them. Our parents are responsible for our life and growth. They teach us how to respect all life, how to treat our own spouses and family, how to be honest, how to share our earthly goods—in other words, how to keep the other commandments.

The fourth commandment also teaches that we have certain duties toward our parents (and all those in authority). That is why it focuses on us as the children of our parents. This is a relationship that everyone experiences in one way or another. It is intended for adults with life-long obligations and is concerned with how we relate with other members of our extended family (aunts and uncles), those who are older than us, those who have gone before us in death as well as teachers, employers, government officials, and all leaders both secular and spiritual.

The full wording of this commandment includes a reward: *“Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you.”* (Exodus 20:12). In other words, God’s plan is for all of us to live in peace and harmony with one another: young and old together. Failure to keep this commandment brings harm on our families, our communities and ourselves. As with the other commandments, however, we know that things do not always go according to God’s plan.

A. THE FAMILY IN GOD’S PLAN

The Nature of the Family

The *consent* of spouses is the basis of their covenant (agreement) to live as husband and wife. In their new life together, the purpose and meaning of marriage and the family is twofold: 1) *the good of spouses*, and 2) *having and raising children*. This marriage covenant creates basic rights and responsibilities for each person in the family— spouses and children. Each member of the family has equal dignity. Each member serves the common good of all in the family. This also holds true for every community including the human family.

When God created the first man and woman and said to them: *“Be fertile and multiply:...”* (Genesis 1:28) he also was creating the family. The family is so basic to human society that it is the beginning point from which all other human relationships are measured. The family exists in its own right even before any public authority recognizes it. In fact, public authority has an obligation to recognize and respect the family.

The Christian Family

The Church looks on the Christian family in a very special way. It calls it a “domestic church.” (*Lumen Gentium* 11). It means that the family home is the first place where we learn moral values, how to pray to God, and how to use our freedom responsibly. In its own way, the family is like the Church because it brings people together who share faith, hope and love. The family lives by the same advice that the apostle Peter gave to the whole Christian community: “...all of you, be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble” (1 Peter 3:8).

The Church also describes the family as a “communion” of persons. This points to the love that the Trinity shares as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When parents give birth and raise their children they share the Father’s work of creation. Through their joys and sufferings, family members share in the death and rising of the Son. The Christian family also shares the work of the Holy Spirit by spreading the gospel, through its example and hospitality to others. Being a Christian family is not always easy, but through daily prayer and reading the Bible parents and children strengthen their love for one another and God. Family love shows itself in listening to one another, helping one another and respecting one another: “Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21).

B. THE FAMILY AND SOCIETY

Like a body made of tiny cells working together, society is made up of small family cells. In each family the husband and wife are called to give love to one another and their love gives life to their children. When the family is stable and its relationships are life-giving, it forms the basis for freedom and good relations between everyone in society. In fact, the way we learn to live in society is by living in the family first.

The family also is like a school where we learn to think of the needs of others, to share with others and to reach beyond our family to care for others in need—the young, the old, the sick, the disabled, the poor and the dying. As children of God’s family we imitate his love for the poor:

*“For you are a refuge to the poor,
a refuge to the needy in distress” (Isaiah 25:4).*

Sometimes families are not able help themselves much less assist others. That is when other families and groups work together, including our government, to provide what is needed. It has been said that a society is judged on how it cares for its weakest members. It is important to pray and read the Bible, but true religion must go beyond that: “If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,’ but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it?” (James 2:15). The proof of our love is in our actions. However, even when people are very poor, it is important for those who are helping to do so with respect, taking care not to step on the rights and dignity of those who are weak or poor.

Because the family is so important for the life and well-being of society, society must support and strengthen marriage and the family. It is the serious duty of the government, its laws and policies recognize “the true nature of marriage and the family, to protect and foster them, to safeguard public morality, and promote domestic prosperity” (*Gaudium et Spes* 52,2). The Catholic Church also teaches with the fourth commandment that the government must respect and support the family. It has a duty to guarantee the following *freedoms and rights*:

- 1) the freedom to start a family, have children, and raise them according to values of the family,
- 2) the right for marriage and the family to be protected so that they can continue to exist,
- 3) the freedom of religious belief and to raise children in that belief,

- 4) *the right to own property, do business, have a job, own a home, and settle in another country,*
- 5) *the right to medical care, elderly assistance and family benefits,*
- 6) *the right for health and security to be protected.*

The fourth commandment sheds light on all our relationships—our parents, brothers and sisters, cousins, fellow citizens, all baptized members of the Church as well as every human being. Each of us are children of God who is "*our Father*." Therefore, every human being is a *person*, not just a number or thing. Each of us is *someone* who deserves respect and care because we belong to God who made us and cares about us: "...*I am concerned about you and about the way you are being treated...*" (Exodus 3:16).

Because a human community is made up of *persons*, relations should not only focus on rights and duties. For example, employers and employees, or governments and citizens, should go beyond justice to foster good will and recognize each person's dignity in a way that is neighborly.

C. THE DUTIES OF FAMILY MEMBERS

All parents have their beginning with God the creator of all life. This is why we owe honor and respect to our parents. Although such respect is called for by this commandment, it should come naturally because our parents gave us life. Because of their love they have brought us into the world and by their work have enabled us to grow in body, mind and spirit. As scripture reminds us:

*"Remember, of these parents you were born;
what can you give them for all they gave you?" (Sirach 7:28).*

The fourth commandment reminds us that even after we are grown up we still should help our parents as much as we can. We should help them with their material and spiritual needs when they are old, sick, lonely or having other troubles. The Bible encourages us to care for our parents and grandparents even when it is not easy:

*"My son, take care of your father when he is old;
grieve him not as long as he lives.
Even if his mind fail, be considerate with him;
revile him not in the fullness of your strength.
For kindness to a father will not be forgotten,
it will serve as a sin offering—it will take lasting root" (Sirach 3:12-14).*

It is the duty of parents to take care of the material and spiritual needs of their children. Although the public or religious community provides schools, it is the parents' job to teach their children about faith in God, how to pray, and how to behave well.

D. THE FAMILY AND THE KINGDOM

Family ties are important, but as children grow up, they become more mature and independent. Each person has a God-given vocation that becomes clearer and stronger as time goes on. Parents should encourage their children to find their vocation in life. They should teach children that their first calling is to follow Jesus. This means belonging to God's family and living how God guides us. As Jesus taught: "*For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother.*" (Matthew 12:50).

E. THE CIVIL AUTHORITY

Civil authorities and governments must respect the basic human rights of each person and protect their freedom. On the other hand, every *citizen* has the duty to work with the authorities to create a society

that works together for truth, justice and freedom. However, as Jesus told the Roman governor, Pilate: *“You would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above”* (John 19:11). That is why as citizens we are bound by conscience not to follow orders or civil laws when they go against God’s laws. At such times the Word of God taught by the Church to guide our decisions: *“We must obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:29).

Every society is based on a vision of humanity and its destiny. This creates its values and conduct. Whenever a society does not recognize that human beings are more important than things it is the role of our religion to clearly show that God is our beginning and our destiny. The Church challenges political authorities to keep this truth in mind this truth about God and human life. When a society does not live by this spiritual vision it looks for a human one. Therefore, even in political situations the Church must protect the dignity of human beings and the salvation of their souls. The Church can do this only in ways that are in harmony with the Gospel and are best for all human beings.

F. WHEN PARENTS OR AUTHORITIES ARE ABUSIVE

Sometimes life does not go the way we like. We may have to face serious questions: *What were our parents like? Were they life-giving or life-threatening? Were we abused as a child or as a spouse? Have we been deprived of our human rights by a government or Church authority?*

Many people who are incarcerated have suffered abuse during their own childhood. Maybe they were yelled at, hit until they were black-and-blue, left on their own, or sexually abused. Sad to say, many people have been abused by parents, a relative or neighbor, or someone in authority. All abuse hurts but it is especially hurtful when done by our parents or a spouse. They are supposed to love and care for us. St. Paul describes how a parent should love: *“For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body”* (Ephesians 5:29-30).

Those who have been abused know what it is like and how hard it is to honor the fourth commandment. They feel anger and outrage over the injustice and harm that one person inflicts on another who is often defenseless. There actually are many kinds of abuse: verbal, mental, physical, sexual, or neglect. For the abused person it is confusing and hurtful. They begin to ask themselves: *“How did I bring this on myself?”* yet they are not responsible or guilty in any way. No one ever deserves abuse. Many people were abused as children but it also happens to adults. It happens to young and old, girls and boys, women and men, the rich and poor. Abusers can be parents, relatives, friends, counselors, teachers, church and community leaders. Often, those who have been abused when they were young learn to put themselves down. They give in to unhealthy relationships. Or, they become abusers when they grow up. Abuse happens when someone takes out their own anger, self-hatred or frustration on another person. Abuse depends on the lie that there are no rules. However, there is no excuse for it. It flies in the face of God and this commandment which calls us to honor one another as human beings and God’s children.

“Even if my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will take me in” (Psalm 27:10). The question is: How can we rebuild our lives and our self-esteem if we have been abused? We can be a father or mother to ourselves by caring for ourselves. We can give ourselves the kindness and love that we needed but did not get. We can assert our rights in a positive and constructive way.

Remembering our God-given dignity, appreciating our self-worth, and standing up for our rights are also important ways to keep the fourth commandment. There are practical ways to live by this commandment while protecting our own dignity and worth. We need to find counselors who will help us, and we must stay away from negative people and make new friends with people who respect us and will not harm us. When Jesus taught his followers about courage in the face of harm, he said that *“...not one of them has escaped the notice of God. Even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid...”* (Luke 12:6-7).

The fourth commandment serves as one of the foundations of the Catholic Church’s social teachings.



The Fifth Commandment

(Read more in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2258-2330).

“You shall not kill” (Exodus 20:13).

Human life is sacred because it begins with God and is linked to God forever. God alone is the source of life from beginning to end. No one, regardless of the circumstances, can claim they have the right to destroy an innocent human being.

A. RESPECTING HUMAN LIFE

The Witness of Sacred History

In *Genesis* we read about the first murder of a human being. Cain resented his brother Abel, grew angry with him and finally killed him. For the first time a human being became the enemy of another human being: *“When they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD asked Cain: ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ He answered, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’ The LORD then said: ‘What have you done! Listen: Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the soil!’ ”* (Genesis 4:8-10). This happened even though God tried to talk to Cain and warn him that *“...sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master”* (Genesis 4:7). Cain ignored God’s warning—the voice of conscience—and crossed the line from innocence to guilt. Even when God confronted him, he would not admit what he had done. He tried to cover it up with a lie to avoid responsibility. But Cain suffered the consequences of his deed. God banished him and made him a restless wanderer on the earth. We can see in the way that God punished Cain that He still loved him. God did not make Cain pay for Abel’s death with his own death. God even protected Cain with a special mark so that no one would kill him.

This story of violence was the first among many described in the Bible. The story of God’s covenant with humanity is a story of God’s gift of life and humanity’s abuse of that gift through violence. Because the Old Testament considered blood the sign of life, the covenant was sealed in blood. This was not to allow bloodshed but to call humanity to a life of peace: *“I set before you here, this day, a blessing and a curse: a blessing for obeying the commandments of the LORD, your God, which I enjoin on you today; a curse if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD, your God, but turn aside from the way I ordain for you today...”* (Deuteronomy 11:26-28). In order to teach the fifth commandment more clearly Moses explained to the people: *“The innocent and the just you shall not put to death”* (Exodus 23:7). Deliberately killing another person is totally opposed to all that is sacred—*human dignity, the golden rule* and the holiness of God*. This law is universal—it applies to every person, always and everywhere.

Teaching About Anger

When Jesus taught about anger during the Sermon on the Mount he repeated the fifth commandment: *“You have heard it was said to your ancestors, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable...”* (Matthew 5:21-22). Jesus went to the heart of the problem, the kind of anger, hatred, and revenge that *wants someone dead*.

Self-Defense

Both spiritual and earthly laws give individuals, communities and countries the right to defend themselves. However, the law against *intentional* killing still holds. The saint and philosopher, Thomas Aquinas, explained it this way: *“The act of self-defense can have a double effect: the preservation of one’s own*

* The following teaching of Jesus is referred to as the golden rule: *“Do to others whatever you would have them do to you”* (Matthew 7:12).

life and the killing of the aggressor. The first one is intended, the second one is not.”

Jesus taught his followers: “ ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Mark 12:31). Therefore, love for oneself is a basic principle of Christian morality. This means that each of us has a *right to be respected* and a *right to life*. Those who defend their life are not guilty of murder even if they had to kill their attacker. Nevertheless, the Church teaches: “If a person in self-defense uses more than necessary violence, it will be unlawful” (St. Thomas Aquinas). Lawful self-defense is not only a right but also may be unavoidable if we are responsible for another person’s life.

Preserving the Common Good

The “common good” means the well-being of the whole community and every person in it. Preserving the common good often means keeping the attacker from causing harm. That is why public authorities have the right and duty to incarcerate offenders. However, a sentence should always be just and fit the crime. If there are other ways to defend lives and protect order and safety, the authorities should not use the death penalty as punishment. The pope, bishops and lay people have worked to end the death penalty because it is “cruel and unusual punishment” and is not in keeping with human dignity and the gospel of Christ.

The purpose of incarceration is to preserve the safety of the community. When incarceration is accepted by the offender, it can be a way of accepting the truth and making amends in the eyes of God and the community. A “restorative justice” approach seeks to heal the wrong done by involving everyone who has been touched by crime, especially the victims. The focus is on healing the wrong done. As much as possible the time served should bring positive changes in the offender. In order for this to happen, every offender has to begin with the truth. As the “good thief” crucified with Jesus admitted to the other convict: “...we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal” (Luke 23:41). Each person also has the right to a fair trial. The authorities must make every effort to convict the right person. Forced confessions, torture, detaining indefinitely and unjust sentencing are also sins against the fifth commandment. All prisoners have the right to be treated as human beings, receive adequate food and health care, be allowed to practice their religion, and have the chance to rehabilitate themselves. Rehabilitation means recognizing their guilt, making amends as far as possible and learning how to get along with others. Despite their wrong-doing prisoners are human beings and children of God. Everyone is worthy of dignity and respect, including fellow prisoners, correctional staff and prison authorities. All those in authority have power “on loan” from God and should use it to defend the human rights of those in their care:

*“Power belongs to God;
so too, Lord, does kindness” (Psalm 62:12-13).*

Intentional and Unintentional Homicide

The fifth commandment teaches that *directly intending* to kill someone is a mortal sin. God told Cain: “Your brother’s blood cries out to me...” (Genesis 4:10). The murderer and whoever cooperates willingly in the murder both sin. We give special names to murders that break natural, human bonds: *infanticide* (killing one’s child), *fratricide* (killing one’s brother or sister), *patricide* (killing one’s parent). Murder of a spouse also is included with these. Scientific research on human genes or concern for public health does not justify mistreating or killing people, even when it is ordered by government authorities.

It is a serious sin when one person *intends to indirectly cause the death* of another person by refusing to help them when they are in danger or by exposing them to deadly danger without a serious reason (when David caused Uriah’s death in 2 Samuel 11). When authorities allow the starvation and poverty of others without trying to end such conditions it is unjust and sinful. Business or money deals that cause the starvation and death of other human beings also are sinful. Usually, we are not morally responsible for a person’s death if it was *unintentional*, unless we did something to bring it about. For instance, we are responsible if we

drive our car into a “no passing lane” and cause the death of the other driver, even though we did not intend it to happen.

Abortion

“*You formed my inmost being;/you knit me in my mother’s womb*” (Psalm 139:13). From the very first moment they exist, human embryos are considered a person and have the right to life. Having an abortion (or cooperating in one) is a sin against human life. Since the first days of Christianity the Church’s teaching on abortion has never changed. Early Church documents speak out against killing the embryo or causing the newborn to die (*Didache, Epistle of Barnabas, Tertullian’s Apologia*). In our day, II Vatican council continued this tradition: “*Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception*” (*Gaudium et Spes* 51,3). The Church is very clear about the sinfulness of abortion because it is a person who is put to death. The right to life of every human being is basic to society and its laws. It cannot be done away with and must be respected by everyone. It does not depend on one individual or the parents. This right is not “granted” by society or the state. It belongs to human nature and each person who received life. The embryo must be defended and cared for, as much as possible, like any other human being. It also is wrong to use human embryos for experiments, and or bring about the sex of the child. This goes against human dignity and each person’s unique identity.

Euthanasia.

People who are disabled mentally, physically, or are weak from age or disease also deserve respect. They need our help so that they can lead lives that are dignified and as happy as possible. However, the Church teaches that it is morally acceptable to stop *extraordinary* medical treatment when it is dangerous, too great a burden to continue, or there are not enough results. In such cases, causing the death is not willed. We simply accept that we can no longer stop it.

Suicide.

Each person is responsible for the life that God has given to them. God is the Creator of life therefore we are its keepers not its owners. Ending our life is against the true love of self and God. The Church recognizes, however, that mental problems, severe hardships, fear or torture can reduce the person’s responsibility. The Church does not judge those who have ended their own lives, but prays for them and leaves them in God’s merciful care. Catholics who commit suicide may have church funerals.

B. RESPECTING THE DIGNITY OF PERSONS

Our dignity and respect as persons are based on our creation by God: “*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you...*” (Jeremiah 1:5). and God’s value of us: “*I am concerned about you and about the way you are being treated...*” (Exodus 3:16). Everyone God has created and loves deserves respect in the following five ways:

- 1. Respect for the Soul:** We should not receive scandal or cause it, either by action or neglect. Scandal leads others to do wrong and damages the soul. It pulls others into spiritual sickness or death, and is especially serious when those in authority cause it (*Matthew*18:6).
- 2. Respect for Health:** We should protect life and health as God’s gifts. Individuals and communities should help one another with food and health care. We should take care not to eat, drink or do anything to excess. We should not “worship” the body by respecting only the strong or physically attractive.
- 3. Respect for the Person:** We should not undergo scientific experiments that do not respect our freedom and dignity as persons. We should avoid organ transplants that have no serious medical purpose and never undergo medical treatment or surgery without our permission.
- 4. Respect for the Body:** We should never be kidnapped, terrorized, raped, tortured or sterilized.
- 5. Respect for the Dead:** We should die with dignity and peace because our bodies are God’s creation and temples of the Holy Spirit. They will rise again on the last day (Read *Job* 19:25-27).

C. KEEPING THE PEACE

War and Peace.

When Jesus taught the fifth commandment he emphasized peace of heart. He warned against the kind of anger and hatred that leads to revenge and murder. Although it is our right to insist on justice and fairness, it is wrong to “take the law in our own hands” by harming those who should be punished. Anger fails the law of love when it is ready to kill or seriously wound someone. In fact, it is a mortal sin. The same goes for hatred. It is a sin to deliberately wish evil or serious harm to others. Jesus challenges us to “...love your enemies, and pray for...” them (*Matthew 5:44*). People often think of peace as the absence of war, or keeping a balance of power between enemies. However, peace means that property is protected, that people can communicate freely, and the dignity and rights of all are respected. Peace is built on justice and love for one another. The only way we will have real peace is through Christ. Through his death, Jesus made peace between the humanity and God: “...in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (*Ephesians 2:22*).

Some Christians reject violence and bloodshed for the sake of the gospel. They use other *nonviolent* ways to defend human rights. These people bear witness to Christian love provided they do not harm the rights of others. They can be used by even the weakest members of society. These people bear witness to the risk of using violence with all its destruction and death as a way to bring about peace. Because evil and injustice seem to be part of every war, the Church urges everyone to pray and act with justice so that God will deliver us from the horrors of war. Violence between groups or nations usually is caused by the lack of hope and justice. That is why Pope Paul VI taught: “*If you want peace, work for justice.*”

Avoiding War.

Although the Church recognizes the right and duty of public authority to protect the community against armed aggressors, all citizens and governments are obliged to work toward avoiding war. After every other effort has failed, governments have the right to defensive war. This decision must be subject to certain conditions that morally justify war. This is called the “*just war*” teaching of the Catholic Church:

1. *The damage inflicted by the aggressor must be lasting, serious and certain.*
2. *All other means of ending the aggression must prove to be impractical or ineffective.*
3. *There must be a real possibility that the war will be successful.*
4. *The use of arms must not cause evils and disorders greater than the evil to be eliminated.*

Note: The destructive power of modern weapons, especially nuclear bombs, weighs very heavily when considering this last condition. When certain modern weapons are used, they seriously harm or kill non-combatants. This is at the heart of the Church’s condemnation of such weapons. In all conflicts and wars, ordinary citizens who are non-military, as well as wounded soldiers and prisoners, should be protected and treated with compassion and respect.

Since the days of the early Christian martyrs who surrendered their lives for Christ, there has been a long Christian tradition of refusing to bear arms or harm another to defend oneself. The government and the military should provide other ways to serve for those who will not participate in war because it goes against their conscience. Even during war there are moral guidelines. It is not acceptable that “anything goes.” Military leaders and soldiers must never carry out immoral orders, for example, to commit genocide or destroy civilian targets. Christians are bound in conscience to resist an immoral order. During World War II a young Catholic husband and father named *Franz Yägerstätter* refused to follow Nazi orders to report for duty. His faith and conscience told him that what the Nazis were doing was immoral. As a result, he was arrested and beheaded. Recently the Catholic Church officially recognized his holiness as a faithful witness to Christ.



The Sixth Commandment

(Read more in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2331-2400).

“You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14).

A. GOD CREATED THEM MALE AND FEMALE

“...*God is love*” (1 John 4:8). God is a living mystery of love that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share as the Trinity. With overflowing love God created humanity in his likeness: “...*he created them male and female*” (Genesis 5:2). God has called man and woman to be

capable of loving one another and to accept the responsibilities of their union. Even though their bodies are different men and women have equal dignity. Their sexuality influences every aspect of their lives as human persons: mind and heart, body and soul. It is like the two sides of one coin: it includes the *ability to love* and *to create new life* in cooperation with God. Each man and woman is called to appreciate and accept their sexual identity as a gift from God. The physical, mental and spiritual differences between a man and woman are according to God’s plan. These differences allow men and women to complement one another and guide them to marriage and family. This union of men and women in marriage imitates in a natural and beautiful way God’s own self-giving love. By God’s design all human beings receive life through sexual union. The Church teaches that understanding the sixth commandment includes an appreciation of all the positive aspects of human sexuality. Through sexuality men and women grow into mature human beings.

B. THE CALL TO BE CHASTE

Although many people may not see it that way, being *chaste* is a very positive attitude and behavior. It means accepting and living with the physical and spiritual sides of ourselves as persons. For this reason, chastity involves the whole person—*our bodies, minds and hearts, and souls*. Being chaste means we understand sexuality as a beautiful gift that allows two human beings, a husband and a wife, to share their lives together. It means *integrating* our sexuality.

The Integrity of the Person.

The word *integrity* means bringing all the separate parts into harmony. For example, it means putting all the pieces of the puzzle together into one picture. It means all the members of a choir sing in tune. It means something is in good, operating condition. Our integrity as a person means that we “have it together.” We are whole and healthy in body, mind and spirit. When we have integrity we oppose or avoid anything that harms us as a person. We do not live by double standards, “what you see is what you get.” Being chaste means that we respect our God-given power to live and love. It means we have trained ourselves to be truly free. Either we know how to control our passions and live in peace, or we are dominated by them and are not happy. Out of self-respect and dignity we make conscious and free choices. We are not blinded by impulses within ourselves, or subject to pressures from outside of ourselves. We grow in dignity as we rid ourselves of slavery to our passions and freely choose what is best for us. Because we promised at baptism to *resist temptations*, we must find ways to keep this promise. Therefore, need to know our strengths and weaknesses. We need self-discipline to resist whatever tempts us. We should avoid the people, places or things that are not good for us. God will help us if we listen to him and pray faithfully. As St. Augustine wrote in his *Confession*: “*Chastity gathers us together and leads us back to the unity from which we were broken into many pieces.*”

No one said that it is easy to live chastely. Like a child we grow and make progress through steps that are imperfect and often marked by failure. We build ourselves up day by day, through the free decisions

we make. We might not become chaste and truly loving overnight, but we should not be discouraged. Although it is the responsibility of each person, it also helps to have help from other people. Family and friends can support or harm our efforts to grow in responsible love. Chastity involves respect for the rights of each person, and one of them is the right to be educated about sexuality and human life. Chastity is a gift from God who will bless our efforts. As the Bible says: “...*the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (Galatians 5:22-23).

The Unselfish Gift of Chastity

Under the influence of unselfish love, chastity is a “school” where we learn how to give as a person. Learning self-discipline teaches us to give of ourselves. We become witnesses to God’s faithful love and care for others. A wonderful result of chastity is true friendship. Whether it is between people of the same or opposite sex, healthy friendship is a gift. We learn to be like Jesus who welcomed everyone—men and women, saints and sinners—as his friends (*John 15:15*). He invites us to follow his example.

The Various Kinds of Chastity.

Through baptism we are called to follow Christ and make ourselves “...*pure, as he is pure*” (1 John 3:3). Each of us should try to live chastely according to our state in life whether we are single, married or celibate. In each case we give God our undivided hearts. Saint Ambrose taught: “*There are three forms of chastity: the first is that of spouses, the second that of widows, and the third that of virgins. We do not praise any one of them to the exclusion of the others... This is what makes for the richness of the Church.*” For couples who are engaged it is a time of mutual respect and learning to be faithful to each other, as they wait to express their love sexually until they are married.

C. THE LOVE OF SPOUSES

Sexuality, as God meant it to be, naturally leads toward the love of husband and wife. The physical, emotional and spiritual attraction that men and women have for one another is intended by God to lead to the unselfish gift of love. In marriage, the physical intimacy is both a promise and a way to become more united. When people give themselves to one another in sexual love it is not simply biological. It also involves the mind, heart and soul of each person. Spouses may not always think of it, but the joyful acts of pleasure are truly holy because they are self-giving and designed by the Creator. In fact, spouses should accept and celebrate their sexual love as a gift from God. Sexual love promotes the two-fold purpose of marriage: it is *good for the spouses* themselves and it *transmits life*. These two purposes carry out God’s command to be faithful and fruitful. It is deeply human and truly loving when a man and woman give themselves to one another until death.

The close partnership in life and love that married couples share begins with the covenant they sealed with their own consent. In this covenant they agreed to give themselves completely to one another. As Jesus taught, “*So they are no longer two, but one flesh*” (Matthew 19:6). Like Christ, spouses are called to share in the God’s creative power by transmitting life and caring for their family as they grow in love for one another. The Church sees in them the beautiful *sacrament* of Christ’s selfless love for his people, the Church.

Homosexuality

Many families and communities know someone who is homosexual—someone who is sexually attracted *only* or *mostly* to persons of the same sex. This is different from someone who *sometimes* feels this attraction. It seems clear that men or women do not choose to be like this. Why it happens to some persons and not to others is a mystery. However, it does seem to happen in every time and culture. Most likely there were persons who were homosexual during the time of Jesus. No words of Jesus were recorded on this subject, but we do know that he made friends with all kinds of people. The tradition of the Church, based on scripture, teaches that homosexual *acts* are not natural. It regards the homosexual act as closed off to having children. Nevertheless, the Church also teaches that *persons* who are homosexual must be treated with respect and compassion. There should be no injustice or discrimination of any kind toward them. Like everyone else, persons who are homosexual are called to do God’s will.

They can accept their sexual orientation in a spirit of sacrifice modeled after Christ.

D. FAMILY LIFE AND CHILDREN

The Bible and the Church see families as a blessing from God and a sign of the parents' love. Children spring from both human and divine love. Although children depend on parents to take care of them for many years, the parents do not *own* their children. Children must never be seen as property. They are persons of their own who also have basic human rights. They deserve respect and dignity. In fact, God has great respect for children. When Jesus taught about who belonged to God's kingdom he took a child from the crowd and said: "*Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 18:3). Children have the right to be respected as human beings from the moment they are conceived in the womb.

D. OFFENSES AGAINST THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

Offenses Against Chastity

- *Lust* is desiring or enjoying sexual pleasure that is *disordered*. Lust is wrong because it ignores sexual pleasure's purposes of mutual love and having children. Lust is not concerned with what is truly good for the other person or themselves: "*Lust indulged starves the soul*" (Proverbs 13:19). In other words, it is not enough to make us happy. We were made for love so lust leads us in the wrong direction.
- *Masturbation* means deliberately stimulating our genitals for pleasure outside of marriage. The Church also regards this as disordered because it seeks sexual pleasure outside of marriage and dishonors God's plan. It also is a lonely act that does not satisfy our deep need for mutual love. To understand if a person is completely responsible when doing this, we must consider if the following lessens their guilt: severe anxiety, emotional immaturity and psychological or social problems.
- *Fornication* is the sexual encounter between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. It is contrary to the dignity of persons as well as human sexuality which is intended for the good of spouses and the generation of children. It also is a serious scandal when the young are taught that this is good or normal.
- *Pornography* is wrong because it shows publicly what is the private gift of the Creator to each person. It seriously injures the dignity of all who participate—actors, vendors and viewers.
- *Prostitution* (paying for sex) harms the dignity of all who participate because it reduces people to pleasure objects, offends the intimacy of love and degrades the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit: "*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?*" (1 Corinthians 6:15). Prostitution can involve women and men, but when it involves adolescents and children it adds the sin of scandal. Although it is always sinful to engage in prostitution, poverty or blackmail may be part of its cause.
- *Rape* is the forced, sexual violation of another person. It is a sin against justice and charity because it offends the respect and freedom of victims, and leaves physical and emotional wounds. Rape of children by parents (incest) or those responsible for children (foster parents, teachers, counselors, coaches, doctors and church leaders) is extremely harmful because it can scar the survivors for life. Rape is always evil.

Offenses Against Marriage

The Church teaches that the following threaten or destroy the true meaning of sexuality and marriage:

Adultery

When two married people have sex but are not married to each other, or when one is married but the other is not, it is called adultery. This behavior is wrong for several reasons: it goes against the original plan of God regarding marriage, it is an injustice toward the other spouse and it brings harm to the two people who commit this sin. Adultery violates the covenant that spouses make to love one another faithfully. Adultery also is a signal that something is wrong with a marriage and needs attention and healing. Through forgiveness, counseling and prayer, the spouses can overcome this serious wound to the health of their marriage. Healing is possible with hard work and the help of God who wants us to be happy: "*The body, however, is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body; God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power*" (1 Corinthians 6:13-14).

Divorce

When people get divorced they break the covenant they made before God and other witnesses to live together until death. Based on the tradition of Moses the Jewish religion allowed husbands to divorce their wives. During a discussion about this the Pharisees challenged Jesus who was teaching that it should no longer be allowed: “ ‘Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss [her]?’ He said to them, ‘Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery’” (Matthew 19:7-9). Even his own disciples found this teaching hard to accept. Later they privately said: “If that is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry” (Matthew 19:10). But Jesus was calling his followers to a new and deeper understanding of God’s plan for humanity. He knew this was not easy and replied: “Not all can accept [this] word, but only those to whom that is granted” (Matthew 19:11). The Church does understand that sometimes married people separate for serious reasons. Examples might be: when their relationship is no longer life-giving, when their differences can no longer be reconciled, or when one spouse is abusing the other. They usually are not allowed to remarry, however, because that would be adultery. The spouses should “...remain single or become reconciled...” (1 Corinthians 7:11).

However, there is a process provided by the Church through a *marriage tribunal*. It is called an *annulment*. This involves an official investigation into a marriage, and if there are just reasons, what appeared to be a marriage is declared null and void. This is not the same as a divorce because the conclusion is that there never was a real marriage due to a serious defect that existed before the so-called marriage. Examples of such defects are: if either person was forced to get married, was too young, was mentally ill, or was too closely related, or not capable of the emotional maturity needed for a life-long commitment.

Polygamy

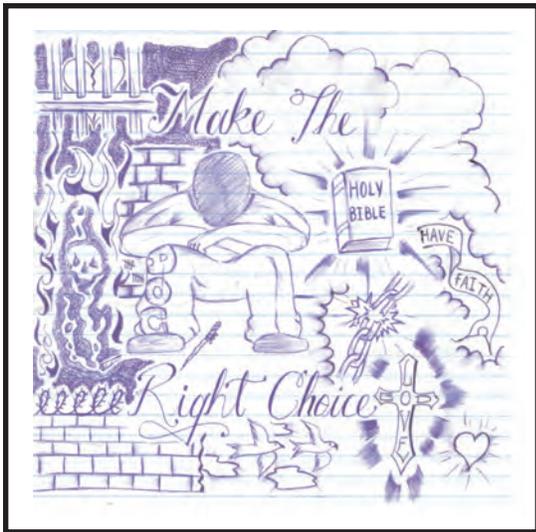
Polygamy (po-lig-a-mee) comes from a Greek word that means *more than one spouse*. Although it was practiced in Old Testament times, the Church teaches that this kind of relationship offends the dignity and equality of women and men. It is against civil law in our country, but sometimes the Church has encountered people of other cultures who live in this way. In such cases, it teaches converts to dismiss all but one wife, while making sure that any other wives are not left in poverty.

Incest

For both moral and medical reasons *incest* (sexual relations with family members) is wrong (Leviticus 18:7-20). It goes against God’s plan for the family and puts the children at risk of illness and deformity.

Free Union and Trial Marriage

While discussing marriage and divorce Jesus had this to say about the true meaning of marriage: “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate” (Matthew 19:4-6). From what Jesus said it is clear that it is not God’s plan for men and women try living together without vows. Such a relationship seems to be based on some weakness of one person or both. There may be a deep-seated lack of trust or commitment. Today’s divorce rate shows that living together without getting married does not promote a successful marriage even after these people get married. Afterward, many find it too hard to accept the responsibility of being married.



The Seventh Commandment

(Read more in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2401-2463).

“You shall not steal” (*Exodus 20:15*).

The seventh commandment forbids us to take or keep unjustly what belongs to others. This commandment protects the *common good* of all people and the earth itself. It reminds us that God has given us everything we have and use, and to be careful of the needs and rights of all other creatures. Therefore, we must act carefully toward the earth (ecology) and in the ways that we make a living (economy).

A. THE OWNERSHIP OF GOODS

The Bible teaches that God has entrusted the earth and its resources to us: “*God saw how good it was. Then God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion...’*” (*Genesis 1:25-26*). Being a “master” of the earth and its resources does not mean that we are free to abuse them. Instead, we must learn how to live and use God’s gifts well, just as we to “master” riding a bicycle or playing a guitar. Although God wanted the goods of creation to be used by the whole human race, it is natural and lawful for people to own land and make a living from it. Therefore, it is important to recognize the freedom and dignity of persons and to help each of them to meet their basic needs of food, shelter, clothing and health. This calls for *solidarity* between all human beings. The *right to private property*, that we get by work, as an inheritance or as a gift, does not do away with the original gift of the earth to all humanity. Respect for this right promotes the common good. As we use our goods we should not think of them as only ours, but as something that can benefit others too. In other words, when we own property we share in God’s providence (his loving care for all creatures). We are given the responsibility to share the benefits of our work with others. For example, farms or factories should be used by those who own them in ways that benefit the greatest number of people. Owners should use what they have wisely, saving part of it for guests, the sick and the poor.

B. RESPECT FOR OTHERS AND THEIR GOODS

With regard to the economy, *respect for human dignity* means not to be consumed with selling and owning worldly goods. *Justice* means preserving the rights of everyone and giving them what they deserve. *Solidarity* means living by the golden rule and allowing ourselves to be led by Christ’s example: “*For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich*” (*2 Corinthians 8:9*).

Respect for the goods of others. The seventh commandment forbids us to steal, that is, to take what belongs to others without their permission. However, we are not stealing in the case of desperate need, when the only way we can provide for food, shelter or clothing is to use the property of others. Nevertheless, even when it does not break civil laws, if we take and keep the property of others unjustly it is against the seventh commandment. Deliberately keeping what we borrowed is wrong. If we find something that is lost we should try to find the owner, otherwise keeping it is wrong. Making dishonest business deals, raising prices by taking advantage of the ignorance or hardship of others, paying unjust wages are all sinful ways of dealing with others. It also is wrong to influence the judgments of those

who should make law-abiding decisions, take and use privately what belongs to a group or business, do sloppy work, not pay taxes, forge checks and other documents, to be wasteful and spend excessively or damage private or public property. In obedience to this commandment we should repair or restore what we have damaged or taken. We should keep *promises* and *contracts* if what we agree to do is morally right. In themselves, games of chance or wagers are not against the seventh commandment, but become wrong when they deprive us of what we need to care for ourselves or others. Some people become addicted to gambling. This points to a very important aspect of the seventh commandment—it forbids anything that enslaves other human beings. People cannot be bought, sold or exchanged like property. This is called “human trafficking.” It is a sin against the dignity and rights of human beings to force them to make products or treated them only as a way to make a profit. All these things offend our human dignity and the God who created us.

Respect for the integrity of creation. The seventh commandment also calls us to respect and value everything that God has created: “*God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good*” (*Genesis* 1:31). Everything in nature is meant for the good of every generation—past, present and future. We must keep in mind that what we do today will touch the lives of those who follow us, including our own children and their children. How we use the earth’s resources cannot be separated from what is right and wrong. Our “dominion” or mastery of animals and the earth itself is a gift from God. It means we must respect and care for all living creatures. They are our companions on this earth as we work and play. They help keep us alive by providing our food and medicine, so without them we would perish. As long as it is not cruel, medical and scientific experiments on animals are acceptable because it helps save human lives. It offends the Creator and human dignity to make animals suffer or die needlessly.

C. THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

The Church sees revealed in the gospel the full truth about human life. The mission of the Church is to proclaim, in the name of Christ, the good news and our calling as human beings to live as a community. Forming this human community takes justice and peace. Because the basic rights of people or the salvation of their souls are at stake, the Church is also our teacher in economic and social matters. It is concerned with the common good especially when it involves our spiritual well-being and dignity. Through its *social teaching* the Church helps us make good decisions and gives us guidelines for our actions. At the heart of Church’s social teaching is anything that devalues human beings and makes profit the only goal of economic activity is morally wrong. This “disordered” love for money is the cause of many human problems and suffering. It also contributes to peoples’ loss of faith in God.

D. THE ECONOMY AND JUSTICE

The economy or “market” is meant to care for the needs of all human beings. It does not exist for the sake of making more products or increasing profit and power. A just economy must first of all focus on caring for both the person and the whole human community. The Church recognizes that the economy or “market” is unjust when the needs of people are ignored.

The *work* we do has dignity and meaning because we are created in the image of God. We continue God’s work of creation so it is also a duty that honors the Creator. Through our work, each one of us should be able to make a living for ourselves and our family, and to contribute to the good of the community. Because different interests are at stake that sometimes oppose one another, conflicts can arise. Such conflicts can be resolved by *negotiation* in a way that respects the rights and duties of all. All of this rests on our individual rights of freedom and private property. It is the government’s duty to protect the security and human rights in the economic arena, so that everyone can enjoy the fruits of their labor. However, it is mainly the responsibility of individuals, groups and associations who make up society to make sure the government does this. Those who own businesses are responsible for what they do to the

community and the earth. They must keep in mind the common good, not just what increases their profits. On the other hand, profits are important if everyone is to benefit because they secure the future of a business and its jobs. Employment must be open to everyone without discrimination, including men and women, people with disabilities and immigrants. Everybody who works should earn a just wage—one that guarantees a decent living for themselves and their families. Going on strike is morally acceptable when there is no other way to gain a benefit. However, it is morally unacceptable when the strikers use violence. Being out of work wounds our dignity and seriously puts our families at risk. Because it touches on survival, lack of employment can be a cause of crime in a community.

E. JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY

When one nation has more resources and produces more goods than another it causes a serious gap between nations. One is rich and the other is in debt. This calls for *solidarity* among nations who can help one another by getting rid of whatever blocks the growth of poor countries. This means getting rid of abusive banking practices, unfair business relations and the arms race that takes money away from programs for people. Nations must work together to share the earth's resources and put human beings first. Rich nations have a duty to help those who cannot help themselves or are poor because of tragic events in their history. This is especially a matter of justice when one nation grew rich from the resources it took unfairly from another. Although direct aid is one way to help in times of disaster, it is not a good way get rid of poverty or create a lasting solution to the problems of the poor. As the saying goes, "*Give someone a fish and you feed them for the day. Teach them to fish and you feed them for a lifetime.*" People do not want a handout, they want a dignified way to make a living. That is why fair economic and financial practices are so important between rich and poor.

F. LOVE FOR THE POOR

The Bible is very clear about God's special concern for the poor who calls us to be mindful of them: "*The needy will never be lacking in the land; that is why I command you to open your hand to your poor and needy kinsman in your country*" (Deuteronomy 15:11). That is why the Church calls it the *preferential option* for the poor—in other words, if anyone has first place in God's eyes, it is the poor. Before Jesus was born, his mother sang in strong and clear words about God's care for those in need:

*"The hungry he has filled with good things;
the rich he has sent away empty"* (Luke 1:53).

When Jesus began his ministry, concern for the poor was at the heart of his mission: "*...the poor have the good news proclaimed to them*" (Matthew 11:5). All creation, all human beings, have value in the eyes of God and caring for the poor is a sign of that truth.

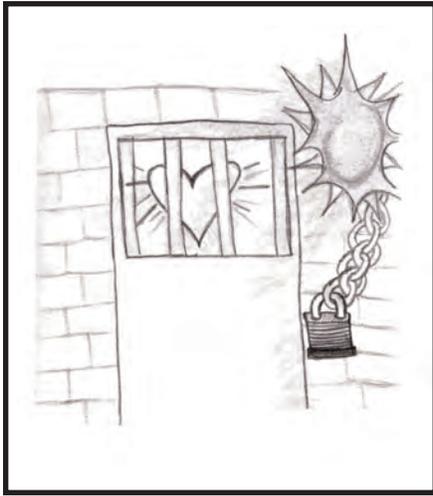
In giving us his Son as a sign of his forgiveness, God has given us *grace* as the greatest gift of all, so we ought to be *gracious* to others in return. That is why Jesus reminded the apostles as he sent them on their mission: "*Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give*" (Matthew 10:8). One of the strongest lessons Jesus taught was in the parable of the last judgment. Jesus warns that only those who cared for the needs of others will be recognized as his true followers: "*Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food,...*" (Matthew 25: 34-35). The poverty of Jesus himself and his concern for the poor are at the heart of his beatitudes: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit,...*" (Matthew 5:3). In *Luke* Jesus speaks directly to the poor: "*Blessed are you who are poor...*" (Luke 6:20). In *Mark* we read how Jesus praised the generous heart of the poor widow who gave only two small coins to the temple: "*For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood*" (Mark 12:41-44). Love for the

poor does not mean Christians cannot be wealthy. But it does mean they should care for the needy. Paul reminded the new Christian to “...*labor, doing honest work with his [own] hands, so that he may have something to share with one in need*” (Ephesians 4:28). However, God’s Word speaks clearly to those who gained their wealth on the backs of the poor and use it only for themselves: “*Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts*” (James 5:4).

Love for the poor—the *preferential option*—has been a constant tradition in the history of Church. The word “poor” does not refer only to those without money. It also refers to those who lack housing, clothing and food, as well as those who have no health care, are psychologically or physically disabled, or are in prison. The Christian community in every age has created shelters for the poor and hospitals for those needing health care or assistance because of their disabilities.

Saint John Chrysostom saw helping the poor as justice not only charity: “*Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs. When we care for the needs of the needy, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than a work of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.*” The words echo those of scripture: “*If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,’ but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it?*” (James 2:15-16).

Words, therefore, are not enough. In fact, spiritual words can be an insult to the poor and a scandal to those who watch what Christians do rather than what they say. Saint Rose of Lima said: “*We must not fail to help our neighbors, because in them we serve Jesus.*” In our day, these same words were a favorite saying of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.



The Eighth Commandment

(Read more in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2464-2513).

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”
(Exodus 20: 16).

The eighth commandment forbids us to present the truth incorrectly or falsely to others. This flows from our calling as God’s holy people to live by *“speaking truth from the heart”* (Psalm 15:2). When we offend against the truth in word or in deed we are unfaithful to our covenant with God who is the truth.

A. LIVING BY THE TRUTH

The Bible teaches that God is truth and therefore we can trust in God to save us: *“Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior”* (Psalm 25:5). Because God is truth we live by his words that feed our hearts and souls: *“...not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the LORD”* (Deuteronomy 8:3).

When Jesus Christ came among us, God revealed his truth in him. As Jesus said of himself and his mission: *“I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness”* (John 12:46). God has placed deep within our human hearts a desire to know and live by the truth. Jesus described the devil as *“...a liar and the father of lies”* (John 8:44). When we realize that we have become a living lie or that we do not trust anyone, this desire turns into an urgent search for the truth. We long to be honest with ourselves and to speak with someone who will be honest with us: *“...to the honest you are honest;...”* (Psalm 18:26). At that point we are ready to turn our lives over to Jesus who is the way out of our tangle of lies. Jesus tells us, *“...the truth will set you free”* (John 8:32). And as the truth, Jesus came to live among us and lay down his life for us: *“I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth”* (John 17:19). Once we decide to follow Jesus we cannot do it on our own. The Spirit that Jesus promised can help us change our lives: *“...he will guide you to all truth”* (John 16:13). God made us to seek the truth, so once we have found it we must live by it. We owe this to God who shares his light with us, and to our own dignity as the person God has made. We belong to God we also must live by the truth .

When our actions and words are truthful before God and our fellow human beings we are sincere. This means others can depend on us and trust us. If we are sincere, there is no *duplicity* in us. In other words, we are not two-faced: *“what you see is what you get.”* Jesus loved and praised the sincere of heart: *“Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, ‘Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him’ ”* (John 1:47). Jesus hated hypocrisy and spoke out against it many times: *“Beware of the leaven—that is, the hypocrisy—of the Pharisees”* (Luke 12:1). This is when Jesus became the most angry with his enemies: *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and every kind of filth”* (Matthew 23:27). As Christians we must never become hypocrites. Actually, this makes sense even on a natural level. The world would not be able to survive if people were not truthful to one another. Our world would be full of chaos if no one spoke the truth: *“...they speak without sincerity”* (Psalm 41:7).

2. WITNESSING TO THE TRUTH

When Jesus was being questioned by Pilate he told him: “*For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice*” (John 18:37). Pilate of course replied with his famous question: “*What is truth?*” (John 18:38). He did not understand Jesus and did not wait for an answer. Eventually he gave in to pressure and sentenced Jesus to death. Throughout the years many Christians have accepted their “*...share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God*” (2 Timothy 1:8). Many have followed Jesus to execution for the sake of God’s truth. In situations that call us to witness to our faith, we must not hide it or lie about it. No matter who we are or where we live, we are called as Christians to witness to the truth of the Gospel. We have the wonderful example of so many martyrs including the apostle Paul who kept his “*...conscience clear before God and man*” (Acts 24:16). Down through the centuries the Church has carefully collected the stories of those who gave their lives for their Christian faith. This collection is called the *Acts of the Martyrs*. Saint Ignatius of Antioch was a remarkable witness who died during the early days of the Church. When he was on his way to die he said: “*Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God.. It is better for me to die to Christ than to reign over the ends of the earth.*” Another early martyr, Polycarp, wrote: “*I bless you for having judged me worthy from this day and this hour to be counted among your martyrs...For this reason and for everything, I praise you, I bless you, I glorify you...*” We may never be called to die for our faith in this way, but we certainly are called to live for it. We have many ways to stand up for the faith and live as Christians right where we are. Refusing to repeat a lie about someone, finding a peaceful way to resolve a problem rather than fighting, defending someone’s good name, or explaining Church teachings in a discussion can be courageous ways to witness to the truth and our faith.

C. OFFENDING THE TRUTH

“*Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, for we are members one of another*” (Ephesians 4:25). These words encourage us to be truthful in our ordinary dealings with one another, but they also remind us that our lives are connected as members of Christ’s body. Reputations stand or fall by the truth. What we say in private and in public is important for the well-being of our brothers and sisters in the Church, and for our fellow human beings in the community. When we lie under oath, it is called *perjury*. Such a lie is serious because it can condemn a person who is innocent, allow the guilty to get away, or cause the accused to be sentenced. It is a sin against justice and fairness. Out of *respect for the reputation* of others, we must avoid having an attitude or speaking in a way that causes unjust harm to them. We are guilty of *rash judgment* when we jump to a conclusion about someone’s fault without taking the time to find out the truth. If we make someone’s faults or failings known without a good reason, we sin by *detraction*. Telling a lie that harms someone’s reputation, or causing others to make false judgments about someone is *slander*. According to the eighth commandment every person has a right to have their name and reputation honored and respected. When we say something that is not true in order to deceive others it is a *lie*. The saying “*...he who utters lies will perish*” (Proverbs 19:9) is not so much a prophecy as it is a fact. Those who weave a web of lies will sooner or later get caught in it themselves. We also can lie through our actions as well as our words. Either way we deceive others about the truth. A lie is more serious depending on how much it hurts those who were deceived. Lying is wrong because it violates our right to know the truth, limits our ability to make a good decision, and destroys trust among people. Every offense against the truth must be made right (reparation), even if the one who lied has been forgiven. When it is not possible to make public reparation, it should be done privately. This reparation may be mental or material depending on the kind of damage our lie caused.

D. RESPECTING THE TRUTH

It is important to realize, however, that we do not have a right to the truth in every situation. Sometimes we must decide whether or not to keep silent or speak carefully about the truth. There are many things to consider: the well-being and safety of others, respect for privacy or the common good. Sometimes

speaking the truth might cause scandal. There are times when we are not bound to reveal the truth to someone who has no right to know it. For example, the Church holds what people say in confession as a sacred confidence. This “seal of confession” cannot be violated for any reason. It is a sin for the priest to betray what was said. He cannot express it by word or in any other way. The secrets of those in political office, the military, doctors and lawyers—information given under oath of secrecy—must be kept confidential. However, in cases other than the sacrament of confession, where the secret will cause very serious harm to the one who shared it, the one who received it, or another person, and the harm can be avoided only by telling the truth, then it should be told. Even when it is not given under an oath of secrecy, private information that would cause harm to another should not be shared without a serious reason. A general rule is to respect the privacy of another person’s life. We should try to balance the common good with respect for individual rights.

E. THE TRUTH AND THE MEDIA

The media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the internet) have a big effect on our lives. The information they provide should serve everyone in the community, not just those who have money or power. What we read, see and hear everyday influences our opinions and decisions. Either way, we have a right to information based on the truth. It is a matter of *freedom, justice* and human *solidarity*. Solidarity happens when truthful information helps us understand and respect others.

The danger of the media is that we can become *passive*, meaning, we begin to accept what we see or hear without finding out if it is true. We must not accept everything at face value. We have a personal duty to question and study things more deeply until all of our questions are satisfied. Sometimes we must find several different sources, compare them and weigh them before making our “informed decision.” Although it means hard work, this helps us correct our views until we come to the truth. We owe it to ourselves and to the well-being of our community.

Those who work in the media have a responsibility to serve the truth. They also must not bring unjust harm on others when sharing information. They should try to give equal respect to the facts and judgments about individuals. They should never drag anyone’s good name through the mud.

Public authorities have a special responsibility to the truth because of the common good. They must defend and protect the freedom of information. By passing laws and carrying them out, public authorities should make sure that morality and social progress are not harmed by misuse of the media. Authorities should protect the rights of individuals to their reputation and privacy. They themselves should share information that benefits society and its concerns. It is wrong for public officials to use “disinformation” which is another word for *lies*, in order to change public opinion. Spreading false information in this way offends the freedom of individuals and groups.

Lying is the tool of oppressors who try to cover up or twist the truth to control public opinion. This is called “propaganda.” The Nazis used to say: “Repeat a lie often enough, and people will begin to believe it is true.” Lying to the public undermines the common good of everyone by trying to force the way people think.

F. TRUTH, BEAUTY, AND SACRED ART

There is joy and beauty in truth. When we discover the truth after a long, hard search we are full of joy. We say, “*I get it!*” and our face lights up with excitement. This also is the case when we are dealing with things that are spiritual. Sometimes our joy at finding the truth is beyond words as we try to tell others what is deep in our heart and soul. This is especially true regarding the mystery of God. Even before God revealed himself to us in Jesus the Word, God revealed his truth and beauty through his

wonderful creation. Both the the child and the scientist stand in wonder before the beauty of God’s works on earth and in the heavens. The Bible and the Church teach us that the beauty of created things can lead us to the Creator. In fact, God is the *first* artist, “...*the original source of beauty...*” (Wisdom 13:3). When God created all things he was like an artist at work. As we look at what God has done it leads us to appreciate the One who, like an artist, signed his name to what he made:

*“When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and stars that you set in place—...
...how awesome is your name through all the earth!”* (Psalm 8:4,10).

Because human beings have been created in the image of God they imitate their Creator by also making works of art. Creating a painting, sculpture, music or writing, is a gift from the Creator. These works can lead us to a deeper understanding of the truth.

The Cover of this Study Book.

Art is a powerful way to reach the heart and souls of people. The saying that “one picture is worth a thousand words” points to the truth that sometimes we are not able to put in words what we are feeling or experiencing. Art says it for us.

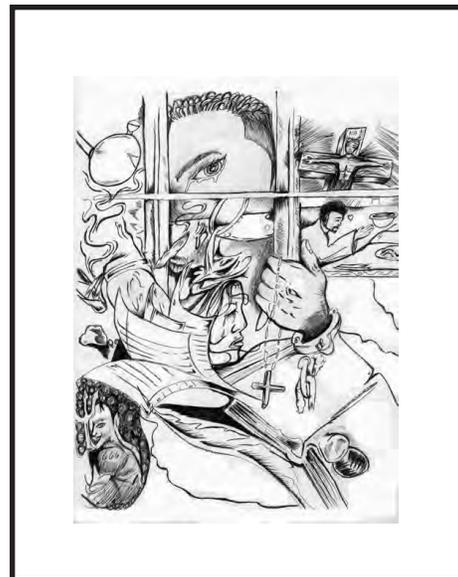
The inmate who drew the picture on the cover of this booklet was dealing with his own struggle for the *truth that sets us free*. He showed all the ways in which he either deceived himself or deceived others, until one day he had enough of the double life and gave himself to Christ who said: “*I am the way and the truth and the life*” (John 14:6).

The Bible on Honesty

*LORD, who may abide in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy mountain?*

*Whoever walks without blame,
doing what is right,
speaking truth from the heart;
Who does not slander a neighbor,
does no harm to another,
never defames a friend;
Who disdains the wicked,
but honors those who fear the LORD;
Who keeps an oath despite the cost,...*

*Whoever acts like this
shall never be shaken. (Psalm 15:1-5)*





The Ninth Commandment

(Read more in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2514-2533).

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife” (Exodus 20:17).

A. THE HERITAGE OF SIN

According to the Bible there are three kinds of “disordered” desires: *lust of the body, lust of the eyes, and pride of life*. Pride of life, or pretention, means pretending to be someone or something we are not.

“For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world” (1 John 2:16). According to the Catholic tradition the ninth commandment forbids sexual desire that is disordered, that is, out of order or out of place. Disordered sexual desire can become like a river that floods its banks. It tends to get out of control and go against our own good judgment and God’s laws. The apostle Paul connects this kind of desire to the rebellion of our *flesh* against the *spirit*: *“...these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want” (Galatians 5:17).* Although in itself it is not a sin, this kind of desire can easily lead us into doing something sinful.

God has created human beings with both body and spirit. The tension and struggle between the physical and spiritual—between our desires and what we know is right—springs from our *heritage of sin*. Our disorderly desires are rooted in the very first sin committed by Adam and Eve. It is simply part of the daily experience of the spiritual struggle in which we need God’s Spirit to help us find inner peace and happiness.

This commandment does not tell us to despise or condemn our bodies, because our bodies and souls make up our human nature that God created. Instead, it is concerned with what is morally good or bad. It teaches us about the virtues that help us obey God, and the vices that resist the help of the Holy Spirit. For the glory of God and our own happiness the Bible reminds us to live by the gospel of Christ: *“If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).*

B. PURIFYING THE HEART

“But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

Although the ninth commandment seems to speak only to men, neither Christ nor the Bible intended to leave out women. What is commanded of husbands is also true of wives—they *should not covet the spouse of another*. This kind of desire is like the heat that cracks the dish. Soon a crack appears in the confidence and trust that a husband and wife have in a healthy marriage. Such desire threatens the covenant that spouses make to love each other faithfully. Desiring the spouse of another and not our own, offends the dignity and worth of our own spouse. The offended spouse can rightly ask: *“What do I mean to you? Do you no longer see me as worthwhile?”* The marriage can quickly begin to break up.

The other side of this commandment is the positive attitude that God encourages in us—to *value what we already have*. The key to married happiness is seeing and valuing what is right in front of our faces. Every marriage goes through phases, from the honeymoon to realistic everyday life. The many broken marriages of Hollywood and our society are a sad reminder that people do not understand this fact. As we grow older, no longer have young bodies, or begin to notice one another’s faults, we are tempted to

look for a change in partners. Yet the true test of love is to see beyond all these things to the heart of the person we married. Our challenge is to discover a deeper kind of love—one that does not exist for physical attraction only. Living through good and bad days, taking time for one another, raising children and making a living are all things that express love. Seeing others as God values them and putting aside our selfish desires are important ways to make our love stronger,

The human heart is the center of our personality. It is where we make our decisions and speak our thoughts. That is why Jesus said: “...*the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart...*” (*Matthew 15:18*). Jesus also told his followers that if they wanted to enter the kingdom of heaven they must become like children. The struggle to purify our hearts and practice unselfish love means living the way that a child does. Children are honest and sincere. They are ready to forgive. They do not hold on to hatred and grudges.

The ninth commandment is connected to the sixth beatitude because the *pure or clean of heart* see things the way God does: “*Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God*” (*Matthew 5:8*). We see others as our brothers and sisters. We respect everyone’s body as a temple of the Holy Spirit and a handiwork of God’s beauty. We see everything in the light of God’s holiness—a word that means wholeness. When we get sick we want to be *whole* again. This means we want to be healthy. To say that God is holy means he is whole and integrated, infinitely different than our broken lives. God wants us to “see the whole picture” of his plan for us so that he can share his joyful life with us. We start by seeing others as God sees them.

By telling us what *not* to do, the ninth commandment also tells us what we *must do* to make our marriages healthy and holy. We need three necessary ingredients: *unselfish love*: “...*it does not seek its own interests...*” (*1 Corinthians 13:5*), *healthy sexuality*: “...*even as Christ loved the church...*” (*Ephesians 5:25*), and *eyes of faith*: “...*their eyes were opened and they recognized him...*” (*Luke 24:31*). This wonderful commandment challenges us to look at other husbands or wives as persons of worth, to treat them with the dignity they deserve, and not as objects of selfish desire.

Saint Augustine has a wonderful way of explaining the connection between a pure heart, a pure body, and pure faith: “*The faithful must believe the creed so that by believing they may obey God, by obeying may live well, by living well may purify their hearts, and with pure hearts may understand what they believe.*” It is like a sacred circle that brings us back to where we started, except that we have grown stronger in love and faith.

C. STRIVING FOR PURITY

Even though we were freed from sin at our Baptism, we still must struggle to be free of our self-centered desires in order to live with unselfish love. With God’s grace we are able to overcome these desires and love others and ourselves as God intended: “*I will rejoice and be glad in your love*” (*Psalms 31:8*).

We begin to understand chastity as a gift that allows us to love with a true and undivided heart: “*I will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them;...*” (*Ezekiel 11:19*).

Filled with God’s vision of life, we try to understand and carry out God’s will in everything: “*To do your will is my delight;...*” (*Psalms 40:9*).

With prayer and practice we can discipline our feelings and imagination, and reject the attitudes that turn us away from God’s loving plan: “*All the paths of the LORD are faithful love...*” (*Psalms 25:10*).

We cannot win this struggle on our own so we pray to God for help and strength: “...*LORD, be my*

helper” (Psalm 30:11).

Modesty

Something that is seriously lacking in our society today is *modesty*. The purpose of modesty is to protect the dignity of every person and to show respect for one another. It means refusing to show the parts of our bodies that are sacred and should remain covered. It supports our efforts to be chaste and serves as a guide for the way we look at others and behave toward them.

Another word for modesty is decency. It involves what clothes people choose to wear and helps us avoid unhealthy curiosity about our own bodies or the bodies of others. Fashions come and go but modest clothing is always a good choice.

Understanding modesty helps us realize how the human body is used to advertise all kinds of things from cars to clothing.

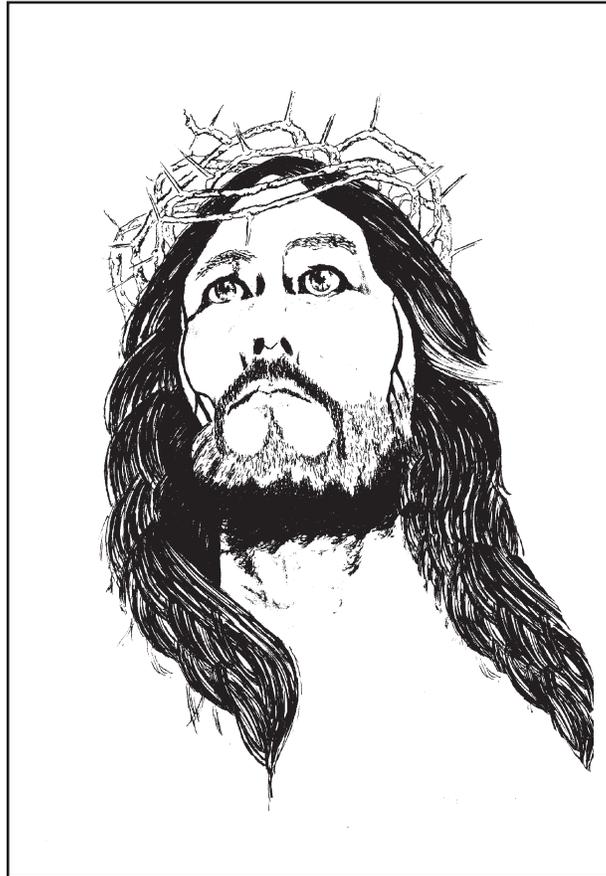
Although modesty can differ from one culture or another, it still springs from an understanding of the spiritual dignity that belongs to human beings. Like chastity, modesty reminds us that we are a *person not a thing*. Creating a healthy attitude in society begins with children and adolescents who learn how to be modest and to respect others in this way from the example of adults.

Our Christian values of purity and modesty should challenge the media to show respect and restraint in their programs. In our day, when pornography is a multi-million dollar business, modesty and purity can bring spiritual freedom from this moral sickness.

Our permissive society has a faulty idea of human freedom. True freedom does not mean we can do anything we want. We hear people say: “*No one can tell me what to do!*” True freedom means we are free to live in the way God made us—to love unselfishly and respect one another. We are not free to abuse, neglect or use one another. We learn to be truly free when we allow ourselves to be guided by God’s law which is designed for our happiness: “*...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom*” (2 Corinthians 3:17). We are meant to live as the free children of God and as members of one body in Christ.

*“He set me free in the open;
he rescued me because he loves me” (Psalm 18:20).*





*“Bear one another’s burdens,
and so you will fulfill the law of Christ”*
Galatians 6:2

*“Love does no evil to the neighbor;
hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.”*
Romans 13:10



The Tenth Commandment

(Read more in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2534-2557).

“You shall not covet...anything else that belongs to...” your neighbor (Exodus 20:17).

The tenth commandment (like the ninth) is concerned with *the kind of desire that has no limits*. However, this part of God’s law forbids *coveting the goods* of others. A single person or whole group of people can have this disordered desire for what others have. It is the cause of theft, robbery, and fraud. It often leads to violence and injustice between persons, groups and even nations. Another name for this kind of desire is *greed*. The Bible also sees this sin as idolatry because we give our hearts and souls to something that is not God. God alone deserves our total devotion and respect. The tenth commandment takes us deep into the mystery of the human heart. When the prophet Jeremiah looked into the human heart he wondered:

*“More tortuous than all else is the human heart,
beyond remedy; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).*

God alone understands who we are as human beings and why we behave the way we do:

*“I, the LORD, alone probe the mind
and test the heart,
To reward everyone according to his ways,
according to the merit of his deeds” (Jeremiah 17:10).*

A. DISORDERLY DESIRES

Our natural appetites serve a good purpose. For example, we eat food when we are hungry, drink when we are thirsty or warm ourselves when we are cold. After we get over being sick it is a good sign when we say: “my appetite is back.” We have other appetites also which are not as visible. We want to enjoy ourselves so we relax, exercise or listen to music. We even say that someone has an “appetite for education.” Our appetites or “desires” are good in themselves because they remind us to take care of our bodily and emotional needs.

Our appetites become a problem when they go beyond their limits. When we eat or drink too much it is unhealthy for us. When we are too busy all the time it is not good for us or those we love. In other words, these appetites or desires can go beyond reason and drive us to do something that harms ourselves or others. When they are out of control, they begin to take over our lives. They actually cause injustice to ourselves and others when they become victims of our actions.

The tenth commandment forbids *greed* which is a desire for extreme wealth and the power, often beyond what is our share. It also forbids the desire to treat others unjustly by damaging what they own. This commandment forbids the unchecked desire to have what does not belong to us. As the saying goes:

“Those who love money never have enough.” It is not immoral to desire to get the same things that belong to another, if this is done in a way that is just. Realistically, some people will find it harder to keep this commandment: buyers and sellers who want to see rising prices, who want to sell at higher prices and buy more cheaply, those who benefit by selling to or buying from others who are reduced to poverty for the sake of profit, even those in the medical field who wish to make a profit from the spread of disease, lawyers who push for cases and trials just to make money.

The tenth commandment calls us to remove *envy* from our hearts. Uncontrolled envy can lead to terrible crimes: *“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice”* (James 3:16). *“Because of envy we fight one another and take up arms against one another. We declare ourselves members of one and the same body, yet we devour one another like beasts”* (Saint John Chrysostom). Envy fills us with an evil desire to get in any way we can what belongs to another. Envy is a mortal sin if it causes serious harm to another. Saint Augustine called envy “the diabolical sin.” Because envy makes us sad when others do well it is a lack of true love for others. It springs from our wounded pride and an insecurity that feels threatened by the success of others. As followers of Christ we should train ourselves to be humble and rejoice in the progress of another. We should give glory and praise to God for the blessings he gives to others. This commandment encourages us to be like the apostle Paul in our attitude toward one another: *“...we have not wronged anyone, or ruined anyone, or taken advantage of anyone”* (2 Corinthians 7:2).

B. DESIRES OF THE SPIRIT

We also have *spiritual* desires that draw us to what we would like to have or become. From the moment God created us we have a deep desire to be happy, to be wise, to love and be loved, to find peace, and to live forever. However, as God warned the first human beings, what sometimes seems good may not really be good for us. That is the lesson of Adam and Eve who *“...saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom”* (Genesis 3:6). Like the apostle Paul we also experience a struggle within ourselves: we know what is good, want to do it, but do not actually do it. Paul wrote about this problem to the first Christians: *“For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want”* (Galatians 5:17). As followers of Christ we can overcome this condition by allowing ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit who *“...comes to the aid of our weakness;...”* (Romans 8:26). With the guidance of God’s laws and the grace that comes with the Holy Spirit living in our hearts, we can turn away from false desires. We begin to realize that only God’s ways can satisfy our hearts completely: *“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God”* (Romans 8:14). Then all our deepest spiritual desires are fulfilled as we enjoy the “good fruit” from the tree of the Spirit: *“...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law”* (Galatians 5:22-23).

C. POVERTY OF HEART

Although we may not like to think about it, the Bible reminds us that our earthly lives will not last forever:

*“I sojourn with you like a passing stranger,
a guest, like all my ancestors”* (Psalm 39:13).

God made us for more than what this world has to offer, as Saint Augustine wrote: *“Our hearts are restless until they rest in God.”* We can gain all kinds of belongings and power for ourselves, but these will never satisfy our deep need for God. We must pay attention to this need or remain forever unhappy. Jesus pointed to this truth when he called his disciples to join him and then challenged them by saying:

“...everyone of you who does not renounce all of his possessions cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

As followers of Christ, whether we are rich or poor, are called to keep watch over what we desire. Our belongings must never get in the way of our ability to give and receive the love of other human beings and the love of God. The temptation of material things is that we may lose our way with them and lose ourselves in the process. At the heart of the temptation of Jesus in the desert was Satan's promise of wealth, protection and power. Yet Jesus responded: "*What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? What could one give in exchange for his life?*" (Mark 8:36-37).

We can own and use material things but they must never overpower us so that we lose our spiritual values or the poverty of spirit taught by Jesus. The Beatitudes reveal that God will never be outdone in generosity. He gives us his entire kingdom if we surrender everything to God. Jesus teaches the good news that the kingdom already belongs to those who have a poor and simple heart: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 5:3).

According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa another way to describe this poverty of spirit is the willingness to humble ourselves: "*The apostle gives an example of God's poverty when he says: "...for your sake he became poor..."*" (2 Corinthians 8:9). The reason God is so concerned about the rich and powerful is because they tend to find their meaning and purpose in how much they have. They may value these things even more than themselves. Therefore they fail to recognize their own worth and dignity.

Finally, when we are poor in spirit we trust in God and put aside anxiety about tomorrow. In this way we are "practicing" what it is like to be in heaven. Such trust in God purifies our hearts so that when we reach heaven we "*...will see God*" (Matthew 5:8).

D. THE DESIRE TO SEE GOD

When our hearts are fixed on true happiness we no longer need too much of this world's goods. This frees us to fulfill our deepest desire—to find our happiness in the vision and happiness of God. Saint Gregory of Nyssa once wrote: "*The promise of seeing God surpasses all happiness. Whoever sees God possesses all the goods he can conceive.*" This means that God who created all things, will share all things with us.

Although it remains a mystery, the Bible teaches us that one day we will see God face to face in eternal glory: "*Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*" (1 John 3:2).

In the meantime, as God's faithful people on earth, we continue our struggle to follow the gospel with the help of God's grace. We live in hope, looking forward to all the good that Christ has promised us: "*For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance*" (Romans 8:24-25). In order to reach heaven and see God, we strive to overcome our disordered appetites, our false desires and our cravings that have gotten out of control and, with God's help, gain victory over the two things that the world seeks so desperately—*pleasure and power*.

As we travel along this spiritual road in the company of our fellow Christians, our minds and hearts are strengthened by the Word of God, and the presence of the Spirit who at times is closer than we realize. We are like the disciples who walked with Jesus but did not recognize him at first: "*Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?*" (Luke 24:32). When we finally reach our heavenly home we will find true happiness in God who is the best and greatest gift we could possibly receive: "*Ever present in your midst, I will be your God, and you will be my people*" (Leviticus 26:12). The apostle Paul described this grand reunion in his own words: "*When*

everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will [also] be subjected to the One who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28). When he says that God may be all in all he means that God himself will be the goal of all that we desire. Saint Augustine also shares his own thoughts on this subject: “We shall contemplate him without end, love him forever, praise him without weariness. This gift, this state, this act, like eternal life itself, will assuredly be shared by all.”

E. GREED AND OUR WAY OF LIFE

“I want what they have.” This desire for whatever we don’t have seems to be the foundation of our economy and often the real reason why nations go to war. Such fighting is over what one has and the other is trying to get.

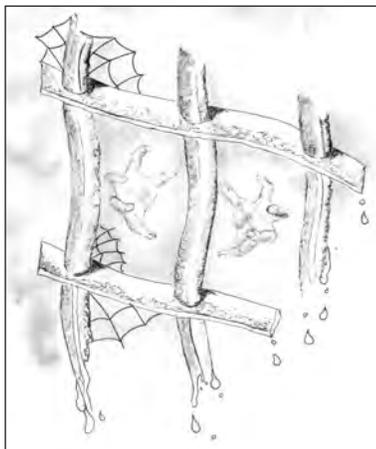
Many people live with the attitude that more is better, or bigger is better, and that beating their neighbor at the game of how much you own is all-important. Many television and magazine ads depend on this kind of greed to sell their products. They try to get us to build bigger houses, have more cars in our garage, own more clothes and jewelry than we can wear. Meanwhile, there is not enough of the earth’s resources to keep up with this demand forever. Even the earth itself has begun to suffer because our desire to have more and more.

The secret to being content is seeing the value of what we already have. During and after a disaster, we soon realize what is important—it is our loved ones. The tenth commandment, like all the commandments, deals with some form of *idolatry*. *Idolatry* is putting something else in God’s place, whether it’s ourselves, another person, things or power.

In the end, God’s vision for the earth and the human race is very different from our self-centered view of things. We must realize that all we have comes from God and can be returned to God in an instant. In *Luke 12:16-21*, Jesus warned us about true and false riches in the “parable of the rich fool” who tore down his barns and built bigger ones to store his harvest. Afterward he proudly told himself:

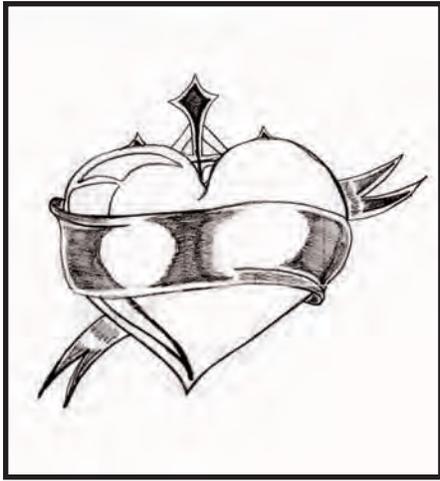
“ ‘...you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!’ But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?’ Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God” (Luke 12:19-21).

This is hard for our society because it is caught up in the pursuit of riches and power. But God’s gifts must never be valued above God himself.



The Bible reminds us:

*“...you dissolve all we prize like a cobweb”
(Psalm 39:12).*



The Greatest Commandment

(Read more about this in the Catechism of the Catholic Church #1949-2055).

One day a rich young man came up to Jesus and asked him: “*Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?*” (Matthew 19:16). Jesus answered his question by first pointing to God as “*...the only One who is good*” (Matthew 19:17). Jesus wanted to be clear that what they really were talking about was God who is the source of all life and goodness. Then Jesus said to him, “*If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments*” (Matthew 19:17). When the man asked which ones he should

keep, Jesus listed the ones that deal with love for others: “*You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother;...’*” (Matthew 19:18-19). And in the same breath he added, “*‘...and you shall love your neighbor as yourself’*” (Matthew 19:19). When the young man told Jesus that he kept all these commandments but something was still missing in his life, Jesus challenged him to go beyond the law: “*If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me*” (Matthew 19:21). The story ends with the man going away because he could not accept the challenge of Jesus.

Later on, an expert in sacred law tried to test Jesus by asking him, “*Teacher, which commandment in the Law is the greatest?*” (Matthew 22:36). Jesus answered him without hesitation, “*You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments*” (Matthew 22:37-40). It was like the two sides of one coin. Jesus explained that the first commandment included the first three commandments about love for God, and the second commandment included the other seven about love for others and ourselves.

Jesus never taught that the commandments should be set aside. As he once said: “*I have come not to abolish but to fulfill*” (Matthew 5:17). However, while Jesus said that all the commandments were important, he also taught that the Spirit was calling us to go deeper and follow the heart of the law. The gospel of Jesus calls us to go beyond the natural human law: “*If you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same?*” (Matthew 5:47). The gospel also challenges us to go beyond the biblical law: “*You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment,...*” (Matthew 5:21-22).

Jesus gave us a new positive way to look at the commandments. He helped us see them as a gift of God’s love and mercy. This is how the apostle Paul learned to understand them too: “*The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, [namely] ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law*” (Romans 13:9-10). That is why Saint Augustine used to say: “*Love and do what you will*” because true love for God and others will lead us to do only what is good. True love never harms another.

THE NATURAL LAW

As human beings we share in our Creator's wisdom and goodness. God enables us to control our behavior as we focus on what is true and good. This natural law gives us a sense of what is moral. It helps us see the difference between what is good and bad. It helps us decide what is the truth and what is a lie. It is called the natural law because it is a basic part of our human nature. In other words, it "comes naturally" to us. It is linked to the ability to reason that God placed in us to help us understand what we should or should not do. This natural ability is part of our dignity as a person and is the basis for our basic rights and duties. It lays the foundation for the human community and gives us the rules that guide our choices. Even when we ignore this natural law it does not disappear from our hearts. It returns again in the lives of individuals and communities. God uses this natural law as a stepping stone to bring human beings to a new level where they live by his revealed law and God's grace.

THE OLD LAW

The *old* law given to Moses in the Ten Commandments, was the first phase of God's revealed law. For every human being this law gives a basic understanding of what goes against love of God and neighbor. It guides the conscience of every person to God's will, and is designed to protect us from evil. However, the old law remains a law of bondage because it only shows us what is sinful. By itself it does not take away our sins. The apostle Paul often wrote about this bondage of the law in his letters (read *Letter to the Romans*, Chapter 7). Even though the old law could only remind us of our sins, it prepared the way for the gospel of Jesus Christ. The old law should not be rejected, because it is like the stem that produces the flower. As the prophet Jeremiah foretold: "*The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah*" (Jeremiah 31:31). It will not be written on stone like the old law: "*I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people*" (Jeremiah 31:33). With those words the stem was ready to bloom.

THE NEW LAW

The *new* law that Jesus Christ gave to us is worded most clearly in the Sermon on the Mount or the *Beatitudes* as it also is called (read *Matthew* 5:3-12). This new law does not lower the value of the Ten Commandments but brings out their hidden meaning. It invites us to go beyond what they command. The new law reaches into our hearts and changes them. It goes to the root of our actions where we make choices about what is right or wrong. It calls us to be generous: "*If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles*" (Matthew 5:40-41). We go from simply following the law to imitating our heavenly Father by forgiving our enemies and praying for those who harm us. The prayer of this new law is the *Our Father*. This law of the gospel is summed up in the golden rule that Jesus gave us, "*Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets*" (Matthew 7:12).

The law of the Gospel is summed up in these words of Jesus: "*I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another*" (John 13:34). This is called the "law of love" because when we follow it we act out of love rather than fear. It also is called the "law of grace" because it gives us the strength to live it, and the "law of freedom" because it sets us free from all the rituals of the old law (concerning clean and unclean foods, washing and separating dishes, etc.). The new law calls us to be friends or close members of God's family: "*I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father*" (John 15:15).

THE CHURCH - OUR MOTHER AND TEACHER

Just as God went ahead of Moses and the Israelites in the desert as a “...*column of fire to give them light*” (*Exodus* 13:21) the Church has been guiding God’s people in every generation. Through the apostles and their successors Christ has given the Church its mission to serve as “...*the pillar and foundation of truth*” (*1 Timothy* 3:15). Therefore, the Church has the right to explain what is moral, and to judge any human situation when the basic rights of the human person or the salvation of souls are at risk. The *deposit* of Christian moral teaching has been handed on from generation to generation by the Church. This deposit is a collection of rules, morals and commandments that are rooted in belief in Christ and are based on Christian love. Along with the *Creed, the Beatitudes* and the *Our Father*, the *Ten Commandments* form the basis for the Church’s teaching on morality.

The pope together with the bishops make up the teaching authority of the Church. This is called the *magisterium*, a word from the Latin *magister*, meaning teacher). Through his apostles Christ has commanded them to hand on the faith to the people entrusted to them. This is the truth to be believed and put into practice as Christian love. In teaching and putting Christian morals into practice, the Church needs the help of pastors, theologians, biblical scholars, all Christians and people of good will. Through their faith and daily living of the gospel, all Christians can contribute to the Church’s understand of what is moral: “*We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given us by God*” (*1 Corinthians* 2:12). In this way the Holy Spirit uses the experience of ordinary Christians to help the theologians and leaders of the Church understand the truth. The Church calls this the *sensus fidelium*, which is Latin for *the understanding of the faithful*.

The Precepts of the Church

We also have a moral obligation to follow the *precepts* (or rules of membership) of the Catholic Church. These precepts provide us with our basic duties as Catholic Christians so that we continue to grow in love for God and our neighbor:

- 1) Attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation (main feasts honoring Christ, Mary and the saints: *Ascension, Assumption, All Saints Day, Immaculate Conception, Christmas*).
- 2) Confess our sins at least once a year.
- 3) Receive Communion at least once a year, especially during the Easter season.
- 4) Observe the special days of *fasting (one full meal): Ash Wednesday and Good Friday* (if we are 21 years old and under 60), and days of *abstinence (no meat): Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all Fridays during Lent* (this rule applies to everyone over 14 years old).
- 5) Give to the support of the Church.
- 6) Follow the marriage laws of the Church.

The Moral Life and Our Mission

Our attitudes and actions as Christians can attract other people to believe in God and accept Christ’s gospel. Because we are members of a spiritual body with Christ as its head, we help build up the church by our convictions and the morals we live by. The Church grows and is strengthened by the goodness of its members. When we live as the Bible says, “...*renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God’s way...*” (*Ephesians* 4:23-24), we actually help the reign of God come sooner—that wonderful reign of justice, peace and love that all of us long for.

Living as a witness to Christ gives us a deep, lasting peace of mind and heart that no one can take from us. It also means God is our true and faithful Friend who is always with us, especially when all other friends, or even family, have not been true to us, have forgotten us or even rejected us. Being a follower

of Christ and living by God's commandments is not always a "bed of roses." Sometimes it means we have to stand up for what is the right thing to do. As Jesus told his disciples: *"You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved"* (Matthew 10:22). As Christians we will meet people who are not interested in Christ or his way of life. They may even be hostile toward us because of what we stand for. Then we must take a stand like Peter who said: *"We must obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29). When this happens as Christ predicted it would, we are following in the footsteps of the apostles who also suffered for the gospel but still rejoiced because *"...they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name"* (Acts 5:41).

It should give us great comfort and courage to know that God will never be outdone in generosity. First of all, God has sacrificed his only Son for our salvation. Secondly, God has sent his Holy Spirit to live in us and guide us. Thirdly, God will give us an everlasting reward if we remain loyal to our faith to the very end, as St. Paul said toward the end of his life:

"I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).



"Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love" 1 (John 4:11).

Review Test - Our Call to Happiness

After completing, all 3 test pages review and correct them with the study coordinator.

Be sure to put your name and ID number on each test page.

1. The commandments not only honor God but also promote our own happiness. ___ True ___ False.
2. Jesus is the perfect example of what it means to be a human being because: _____

3. Why do we have great dignity? _____
4. Why did God put us on earth? _____
5. If riches, fame or power do not really satisfy us who or what does? _____
6. What is the key to our freedom? _____
7. Our guilt is sometimes lessened or removed if we were: _____

8. Whatever we do is either good or bad (moral or immoral). It depends on what three things?
1) _____ 2) _____
3) _____
9. Whenever we have difficult decisions to make what do we have to guide us?

- 10 According to the tradition of the Catholic Church the list of the ten commandments follows which Bible passage? _____

Review Test - The First Commandment

1. Our worship of God is based on what two things? _____
2. What are some ways that we might sin against the first commandment?

3. *Apostasy* means: _____
4. What does the Church call the happiness of finally seeing God face to face? _____
5. What are two serious sins against hope? _____
6. What are two of the five ways that we can sin against God's love? _____
7. Does our "nothingness" as a creature mean we have no value? _____
8. What is absolutely necessary if we are going to be able to keep God's commandments? _____
9. The worship of false gods actually can take several forms. What are some of them? _____

10. Sometimes Catholics are accused of adoring statues or pictures. What is the simple answer?

Review Test - The Second Commandment

1. What is God's own revealed name? _____
2. When we believe God is present, how do we see that moment or what is happening? _____
3. If the second commandment does not forbid us to use God's name what does it forbid? _____
4. False oaths are wrong because: _____
5. When must we refuse to take an oath even when the government orders it?

6. Everyone's name is written in the heart of the Creator. ___True ___False
7. In the Old Testament the large letters "LORD" are used in place of: _____
8. When we make the *sign of the cross* we are recalling: _____
9. When humanity needed to be saved, what name did God give us? _____
10. Jesus taught us a special name for God that brought humanity closer to God than ever before. What is it? _____

Review Test - The Third Commandment

1. The people were commanded to rest on the Sabbath and recall how God freed them from: _____
2. When God rested he also gave human beings an example. What was it?

3. Who said: "*The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath*" _____
4. Why did Sunday replace the sabbath? _____
5. Like the Israelites, we Christians also recall our own *Passover*. What is it?

6. According to author of *Hebrews* the worship of the Old Testament paved the way for:

7. Besides Sunday, the Church also requires Catholics to honor these days: _____
8. In the Catholic Church what word describes a local faith community? _____
9. The word *church* has different meanings. What are they?

10. The Church understands that some Catholics cannot worship on Sunday because:

Review Test The Fourth Commandment

1. The fourth commandment introduces us to the second part of the commandments. What do the next seven commandments focus on?

2. Besides parents who else must be honored according to the fourth commandment? _____
3. What is the two-fold purpose and meaning of marriage and the family?
1) _____ 2) _____
4. Public authority has an obligation to recognize and respect the family. ___True ___False
5. What does “domestic church” mean? _____
6. Family love shows itself in: _____
7. How is the family is like a school? _____
8. Give *one* of the *six freedoms and rights* of the family the government has a duty to guarantee:

9. Why is abuse by our parents or a spouse especially hurtful? _____
10. How can we rebuild our lives and self-esteem if we have been abused by a parent?

Review Test - The Fifth Commandment

1. Regardless of the circumstances, who has the right to destroy an innocent human being? _____
2. Deliberately killing another person is opposed to all that is sacred. What are these sacred things?

3. What teaching of Jesus is referred to as the golden rule?

4. Why have the pope, bishops and lay people worked to end to the death penalty?

5. Forced confessions, torture, detaining indefinitely and unjust sentencing are sins against which commandment? _____
6. How would someone *intend indirectly to cause the death* of another person?

7. From the first moment, human embryos are considered persons and have what right? _____
8. Everyone God has created and loves deserves respect in five ways. Give *one* of the five ways:

9. Why did Pope Paul VI teach: “*If you want peace, work for justice*”?

10. Military leaders and soldiers must never carry out immoral orders. What are some examples?

Review Test - The Sixth Commandment

1. Even though their bodies are different men and women have equal dignity. ___True ___False
2. How should man and woman appreciate and accept their sexual identity? _____
3. What does the union of men and women in marriage imitate in a natural and beautiful way?

4. When people give themselves to one another in sexual love it is not simply biological.
What else does it involve? _____
5. Lust is concerned with what is truly good for the other person: ___True ___False
6. *Why is pornography* is wrong? _____
7. How does *prostitution* (paying for sex) harm the dignity of all who participate? _____

8. When two married people have sex but are not married to each other, or when one is married but the other is not, it is called: _____
9. Adultery also is a signal of what? _____
10. For moral and medical reasons *incest* is wrong. Describe these reasons:

Review Test - The Seventh Commandment

1. The seventh commandment protects the *common good* of all people and the earth. ___True ___False.
2. The seventh commandment has nothing to do with acting carefully toward the earth or the ways that we make a living. ___True ___False
3. As we use our goods we should not think of them as only ours, but as something that benefits others. ___True ___False
4. It is not wrong to deliberately keep what we borrowed. ___True ___False
5. Games of chance or wagers are not against the seventh commandment, but when do they become wrong? _____
6. When human beings are forced to make products or are treated only as a way to make a profit it is a sin against their _____ and _____
7. Our “dominion” or mastery of creation is a gift from God. What does it mean? _____

8. What is the heart of the Church’s social teaching?

9. In the parable of the “last judgment” what does Jesus warn us about?

10. Why did Saint Rose of Lima and Mother Teresa of Calcutta say: “We must not fail to help our neighbors”? _____

Review Test

The Eighth Commandment

1. When Jesus Christ came among us, what did God clearly reveal in him? _____
2. If we are sincere, there is no *duplicity* in us. In other words: _____
3. No matter who we are or where we live, we are called as Christians to: _____
4. What are some ways that we can witness to the truth and to our faith? _____

5. When are we guilty of *rash judgment*? _____

6. Telling a lie that harms someone's reputation, or causing others to make false judgments about some one is called: _____
7. Why is lying is wrong? _____

8. We are not bound to reveal the truth to someone who has no right to know it. ___True ___False
9. The Church holds what people say in confession as a sacred confidence that cannot be violated for any reason. What is this is called? _____
10. The danger of the media is that we can become *passive*. What does this mean?

Review Test - The Ninth Commandment

1. According to the Bible there are three kinds of "disordered" desires. What are they?

2. How can disordered sexual desire be described? _____

3. What does desiring the spouse of another offend? _____
4. What are some important ways to make our love stronger?

5. Why is the ninth commandment connected to the sixth beatitude?

6. To make our marriages healthy and holy we need three necessary ingredients:
_____, _____, and _____.
7. Even though we were freed from sin at our Baptism, what must we still struggle to do?

8. How can we discipline our feelings and imagination, and reject the attitudes that turn us away from God's loving plan? _____
9. Like chastity, what reminds us that we are a *person not a thing*? _____
10. What does true freedom mean? _____

Review Test - The Tenth Commandment

1. What is the tenth commandment (like the ninth) concerned with? _____
2. Why are our appetites or “desires” good in themselves?

3. When do our appetities become a problem? _____
4. When our appetities are out of control and take over our lives what do they cause?

5. What is greed? _____
6. What is envy? _____
7. Describe the struggle we experience within ourselves, like the apostle Paul:

8. What must our belongings never get in the way of?

9. We can own and use material things but what must they never do?

10. In *Luke* 12:16-21, Jesus warned us about true and false riches in which parable?

Review Test - The Greatest Commandment

1. When the rich young man told Jesus that he kept all these commandments but something was still missing in his life what did Jesus do? _____
2. What two laws does the gospel of Jesus call us to go beyond? _____
3. Why is it called the *natural* law? _____
4. What law does God use as a stepping stone to bring human beings to a new level where they live by his revealed law and God’s grace? _____
5. The old law remains a law of bondage because:

6. The *new law (or gospel)* given to us by Jesus Christ is worded most clearly in what?

7. Why is the gospel or new law called the “law of love”?

8. Along with the *Creed* and the *Our Father*, what else forms the basis for the Church’s teaching on morality? _____
9. In teaching and putting Christian morals into practice, whose help does the Church need?

10. What do the precepts (or rules of membership) of the Catholic Church provide?

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