

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD: YOU SHALL NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME.

We must put God at the centre of our lives: believing in him and in all he has revealed to us (faith); making union with him in heaven the goal of our lives, and trusting in him to lead us there (hope); and responding to his love for us, by loving him for his own sake, above all other things (charity).

We sin seriously against faith by refusal to believe (incredulity), or (after baptism) either by abandoning Christian faith (apostasy), or by deliberately doubting or denying any of what the Church teaches to be revealed by God (heresy). We also sin seriously by deliberately rejecting any of the Church's other teachings; or by breaking unity with the Church (schism). We sin seriously against hope, by thinking God does not want to, or cannot, save us (despair); or by thinking we can be saved without God's help, or without repenting (presumption). We sin seriously against charity by hatred of God.

We must adore and worship God alone; we must pray to him often. Promises to God (vows) must be kept. It is seriously wrong to worship false gods (idolatry), or to attempt 'magic spells' (witchcraft) or superstitious 'foretelling' of the future (astrology, fortunetelling, etc.) or 'contacting the dead' (seances) or other occult practices. Spiritual things, such as the sacraments, cannot be bought or sold- this is the serious sin of simony. 'Tempting God', challenging him to demonstrate his power, is seriously wrong. Receiving Communion while aware of unconfessed mortal sin, or deliberately withholding a mortal sin in Reconciliation, or other violations of sacred actions, persons, things or places, are serious sins (sacrilege).

2. YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN.

We must respect God's name. Deliberately insulting God or his saints in thought, word or action (blasphemy), or making false statements under oath (perjury), are serious sins. Oaths should not be taken without necessity. We must not use the names of God or Jesus thoughtlessly or disrespectfully.

3. REMEMBER TO KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY.

We must worship God, both privately, and especially gathered as his Family, the Church. The Mass is God's great gift so we can give true worship: missing Mass without an important reason on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation is a serious sin (attending the previous evening suffices). We should also avoid unnecessary work on these days, to make room for prayer, family life, leisure, and works of charity.

4. HONOUR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.

We must respect family life and authority. Children must respect, honour and obey their parents, and anyone to whom their parents have entrusted them (teachers, etc). Family members should show special love and care for each other, especially when someone is sick, aged or in need. In particular, parents must provide for their children and educate them, especially in faith and in good moral character.

We must all respect and obey those who have rightful authority over us (such as the Church and its laws, or the Government and its laws). However, all authority comes from God: human commands or laws which go against God's law must not be obeyed. Citizens should contribute to society, serving and defending their country, paying taxes, voting. Political authorities must govern with justice, respecting and defending the rights of every person, promoting legitimate freedom, and using their authority for service of the common good. Society ultimately exists to serve the human person.

5. YOU SHALL NOT KILL.

We must respect human life from its conception to its natural end. Murder and suicide are serious sins: the life of an innocent human being is sacred and may never be deliberately destroyed. Abortion and euthanasia, therefore, are always serious sins, despite the difficult situations that can lead people to these acts. However, burdensome treatments may be foregone, as long as death is not directly willed. Killing of an aggressor, in self-defence or war, is justifiable in some circumstances; still, all must aim for peace.

We should take reasonable care of our health. Causing serious injury to ourselves or others (e.g. mutilation) apart from medical necessity is seriously wrong, as is directly intended sterilisation. We should eat and drink in moderation. Drug abuse or complete drunkenness are seriously sinful.

We must love our neighbour as ourselves, since we are all made in God's image. To intentionally hate (i.e.

will serious harm to) anyone, contradicts love, and is a serious sin. Leading another person into sin (deliberately, by negligence or by bad example) is the sin of scandal; it is seriously wrong if we lead someone into serious sin. We should avoid violence, fighting, or verbal abuse. We should not take revenge, or bear grudges. The emotion of anger is not wrong in itself, but is sinful if not governed and moderated by reason.

6. YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

We must respect marriage and sexuality. In God's eyes, marriage is a total communion of two persons lasting a lifetime. Adultery violates this communion and is seriously sinful. Jesus also speaks of remarriage after divorce as adultery: a valid marriage is dissolved only by the death of one of the spouses.

Sex is God's gift for the creation of new life, and for the expression of total self-giving love between husband and wife. Any sexual activity that purposely negates either aspect (procreative or unitive) of God's plan, abuses his gift, violates the body, and is seriously sinful. Thus contraception both violates the natural ordering of sex to procreation, and places a limit on the self-giving of the spouses, since they purposely withdraw the gift of their fertility from each other. (Natural Family Planning can be legitimate since it respects the natural rhythms God has placed in the human body, and the spouses in their act of intercourse still give to each other their fertility, to whatever degree it really exists at that time.)

Any action intending sexual pleasure outside marriage is likewise seriously sinful, isolating sex from either its procreative or its unitive purpose. Thus sex before marriage (fornication) is a serious sin: it is a lie told with the body, since although the sexual act expresses total self-giving, the couple have not in fact made the total self-gift of the marriage commitment. Homosexual acts and masturbation are also seriously wrong, closing sex to the gift of life; those with homosexual inclinations are called to chastity. IVF is wrong, as the child to be born is deprived of its right to have had a sacred origin in the loving bodily union of its parents.

7. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.

We must respect one another's property, never taking anything against the owner's reasonable will (theft). This commandment is also broken by fraud, cheating, vandalism, tax evasion, etc. Unless the amount stolen is small, the sin is serious. To be forgiven by God, we must pay back as best we can what was stolen.

We must care for the environment, which belongs to everyone; we should be kind to animals, although they are not persons and so we may use them for our legitimate needs, such as food.

We should have a special love for the poor, and for all those in need, giving to them and helping them whenever we can. The goods of the earth are directed by God in the first place to the whole human race- we should use our private property for the benefit of others. We should also make good use of our talents and time as gifts from God. Work must be properly done; fair wages must be paid. We must not gamble excessively. We must act justly in all our dealings, and work for justice in our society and in the world.

8. YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOUR.

We must respect truth, seeking the truth and bearing witness to it, always speaking and acting with sincerity. We break this commandment by lying, especially lies that damage the good name of another person (calumny) or do them some other serious harm. Unless we have a valid reason, we must not reveal secrets, such as the secret faults of other people (detraction). Gossip is uncharitable, and often sins against someone's reputation. If the other person's good name is seriously damaged, calumny and detraction are serious sins. Like theft, sins against truth or reputation require us to make reparation as best we can.

We must not assume without good reason that another person has done something wrong (rash judgment); further, even if we know their action is wrong, we must not judge or condemn their heart: we cannot fully know their degree of knowledge and responsibility - only God is judge.

9. YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOUR'S WIFE.

To respect the human body we must avoid not only impure actions (the 6th Commandment) but also deliberate impure thoughts or desires - these are seriously sinful; we must not treat persons as mere objects. Jesus warned against adultery in one's heart. To protect chastity, we should be modest in how we speak, act and dress, and choose our entertainments wisely; viewing pornography is a serious sin.

10. YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOUR'S GOODS.

Money and material things must be our servants, not our masters. We should not be greedy, but should be spiritually detached from possessions, trusting in God, not wealth. It is wrong to envy others' possessions, talents etc., wishing them to be deprived of them, or wishing to unjustly acquire their property.