

Faith in 5 – Adults

The Ten Commandments



1. There are some major essential principles for Christian Catholics to follow and put into spiritual practice. The Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes and Precepts of the Church give direction to our faith, our steps, our way to God and are foundational to moral teaching. As our faith is strengthened, our walk with God and others becomes clear. We receive graces from God for our virtuous obedience and faithfulness.
2. The word "Decalogue" means "ten words." The Ten Commandments were written "with the finger of God" and are pre-eminently the words of God. Beginning with the Old Testament, the sacred books refer to the "ten words," given to Moses by God on Mt. Sinai. The Catechism 1962-1964 says, "The Old Law is the first stage of revealed Law. Its moral prescriptions are summed up in the Ten Commandments". St. Augustine said, "God wrote on the tables of the Law what men did not read in their hearts". The Old Law is a preparation for the Gospel. The gift of the Commandments is the gift of God Himself and His holy Will, where God reveals Himself and His glory to his people (CCC 2059).

These Commandments are the expression and sign of the Covenant between God and God's people and are just as powerful and binding as they were when they were written. They hold significant place in teaching the faith. They bring moral order to life and is the basis for Catholic social teaching. We know God's commandments through the divine revelation proposed to us in the Church, and through the voice of moral conscience. It is in the New Covenant in Jesus Christ that their full meaning is revealed in the **Greatest Law** (CCC 2056).

Jesus tells the young man "If you would enter life, keep the commandments", concluding that the Greatest Law is "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

3. Since they express man's fundamental duties towards God and towards his neighbor, the Ten Commandments reveal serious obligations. They are fundamentally unchangeable, and they oblige always and everywhere. No one can dispense from them. The Ten Commandments are engraved by God in the human heart (CCC, 2072).

4. The list of the Ten Commandments follow with examples of what violations of the Commandment may look like ([Source](#) and [this source](#)).

Questions (italicized by author) can be used to examine one's conscience at the end of the day or in preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation ([Source](#)). The first three commandments are how we must relate to God. The remaining seven, how we must treat our fellow man.

The Ten Commandments (CCC, Part 3, Section 2):

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind

- a. **I am the LORD your God. You shall not have strange Gods before me.**
Avoid idolatry, superstitions; keep reverence for the holy things of God. Do not receive Communion in a state of mortal sin.
- Have I treated people, events, or things as more important than God?
- b. **You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**
Avoid blasphemy, the irreverent use of God's Name, and false oaths. This includes wishing evil on another, insulting a sacred person or abuse of a sacred object.
- Have my words, actively or passively, put down God, the Church, or people?
- c. **Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.**
Avoid unnecessary servile work on Sunday; missing Mass through purposeful indifference. This includes being late or irreverent at Mass and ignoring the Church's practice on fasting and abstinence.
- Do I go to Mass every Sunday (or Saturday Vigil) and on Holy Days of Obligation? Do I avoid, when possible, work that impedes worship to God, joy for the Lord's Day, and proper relaxation of mind and body? Do I look for ways to spend time with family or in service on Sunday?

You shall love your neighbor as yourself

- d. **Honor your father and your mother.**
Hatred of parents is forbidden, as is disrespect and disobedience.
- Do I show my parents due respect? Do I seek to maintain good communication with my parents where possible? Do I criticize them for lacking skills I think they should have?
- e. **You shall not kill.**
Unjust killing, suicide, abortion, abusing drugs and alcohol, unjust discrimination, and endangering life and limb of others is forbidden.
- Have I harmed another through physical, verbal, or emotional means, including gossip or manipulation of any kind?

f. **You shall not commit adultery.**

This includes obscene speech, impure actions alone or with others; sexual activity before or outside of marriage, marriage deemed illicit by the Church.

- *Have I respected the physical and sexual dignity of others and of myself?*

g. **You shall not steal.**

Examples include theft, damage to property of others, bribery, cheating, fraud, not paying just debts, and taking advantage of another's hardship.

- *Have I taken or wasted time or resources that belonged to another?*

h. **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

Avoid lying, slander, violation of secrecy, dishonesty & contemptuous speech.

- *Have I gossiped, told lies, or embellished stories at the expense of another?*

i. **You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.**

Willful impure thoughts, conversation or desires violate this commandment.

- *Have I honored my spouse with my full affection and exclusive love?*

j. **You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.**

Avoid the desire to take, keep or damage the property of others. This is greed and selfishness.

- *Am I content with my own means and needs, or do I compare myself to others unnecessarily?*



For further study of the Ten Commandments:
Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2084 - 2557

Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

—Matthew 5:19

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