

# *Intro to the* **TEN COMMANDMENTS**



## INTRODUCTION

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- Why the theme of the Ten Commandments this year? As beloved daughters and sons of God we are called to love the laws, statutes, and ways of our Heavenly Father. May we join the prayer of the psalmist: “Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long” (Psalm 119:97). As we meditate on these laws given us by our Father, we find first that they are a gift to us, not a curse.
- As we practice obedience, we find that God pours out his blessings upon us. In the book of Deuteronomy we read, “all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the Lord your God” (Dt. 28:1–3). God offered the law as a gift because it leads us to freedom. He makes a covenant with his people after rescuing them from Egypt and he gifts them the law so they can stay in this newfound freedom.
- Not only did God give us his law on two stone tablets, but he first inscribed them in our hearts at creation. As our loving Creator, God gives us the ability to reason, to rationally discover right from wrong, blessing from curse, happiness from sadness. This law that is written on our hearts and embedded in every person’s mind is called the Natural Law.
- Natural Law cannot be changed, amended, or rescinded. With the gift of our ability to reason God offers us freedom, happiness, and fulfillment. Our act of gratitude is to receive this law and obey it, knowing that it is the only way to human fulfillment.
- We do not blindly obey the laws of God like a robot or slave. Instead, we are called to grow in holiness and obedience from the awareness that God’s law leads us to freedom. God defines what is good and bad in order that we have the knowledge we need to choose the fullest life. As our Lord and Savior tells us: “If you would enter life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17), and “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

# REFLECTIONS

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The Old Testament describes and establishes our relationship with God. It paves the way and points to the coming of the Lord on earth.

- Reflect on the time period of when God spoke to His people (Exodus 19:20–25, 20:1–17, 24:3–8). Why did God give the Israelites these commandments?
- What was the historical setting at the time? How were non-Israelites living their lives? Do you find any similarities between that time period and our current time period?
- If the commandments are written on our hearts and are Natural Law, why did God need to give them to us?

*Lord, help me to live as your beloved creation.*

The Old Testament does not stand alone and separate from the New Testament.

- Is this a new idea for you? Does it change the way you listen to the readings at mass? Why?
- Why did Jesus say that he had come not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Mt 5:17–20, 22:34–40)? Compare the “laws” given by Jesus and those of the Ten Commandments? Are they the same?
- What was the historical setting of the time when Jesus was born? How were the non-Israelites living their lives? How were the Israelites living their lives? Do you find any similarities between that time period and our current time period?

*Lord, teach me to love as you love.*

The Ten Commandments are a Gift, from God to us, His people, to help us return to Him and have Eternal Life.

- How will knowing that the Commandments are a gift from God help you to live your life in accordance with them?
- Reflect on how you would feel if someone returned or threw away a gift that you had given to them.

How are you living your life today? Which of the Ten Commandments are the most difficult for you? Which do you knowingly ignore? Which do you think is just irrelevant?

Does knowing that the Ten Commandments are a covenant with God give you the impetus to amend your life? How can we say “I’m sorry” to God for breaking his covenant?

Will you use the commandments as a “blueprint” for your life, a guide for decisions? Are you able to see the commandments as the way to happiness? What is your vision of happiness?

*Lord, only with you can I find happiness. Show me the way.*



# ACTIVITIES

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## For Children and Families

### *For Families:*

- Read aloud: Genesis 1:1–2:4. God loves us. He created us in his own image and likeness. Discuss the many things that God has created. From the reading, what stood out for you the most? What did you hear that is proof of God's love for you? Today, what do you see around you that is proof of God's love?
- Read aloud: Genesis 3:1–24. God created us to be happy and to live meaningful lives. Discuss happiness. What is happiness? What makes you happy? What does it feel like to be happy? What are things that the world around us tells us that we need to be happy? Think about what we hear at school, at work, with our friends, with coworkers, in communications media, in our family.
- Read aloud: Deuteronomy 30:15–20. God promises and he fulfills his promises. Discuss promises. What is a promise? Tell about times when you have made a promise or someone has made a promise to you. What was the promise? What happened? Did you or they keep their promise? Why or why not? How did you feel?

### *For Children:*

- Start a folder or journal. Think of all that God has created. His creation is a reflection of his love, his greatness, and his glory. Draw and decorate the cover of your folder or journal. Make sure you include yourself as one of God's creations.
- Tell, write a story, and/or draw a picture about a time when you have been happy. What happened? What caused your happiness? Did your feelings change? What other feelings did you have? Share your story with someone.
- Tell, write a story, and/or draw a picture about a time that you made a promise or a time when someone made a promise to you.



## For Youth

- Have you ever read the story of when the Ten Commandments were given? Go grab a bible and read Exodus 19:1–25 and 20:1–17 about the story and then read Deuteronomy 5:1–21 where the commandments are listed again. Maybe suggest having your family read it together during the evening and then have some discussion.
- Ask a friend/parent or sibling why they think God needed to give the Ten Commandments to us. Have a conversation about it. Then, spend some time in prayer asking God why he gave them to us.
- Print out a list of the Ten Commandments to keep with you and look at it daily/weekly to help you know them.

## For Young Adults

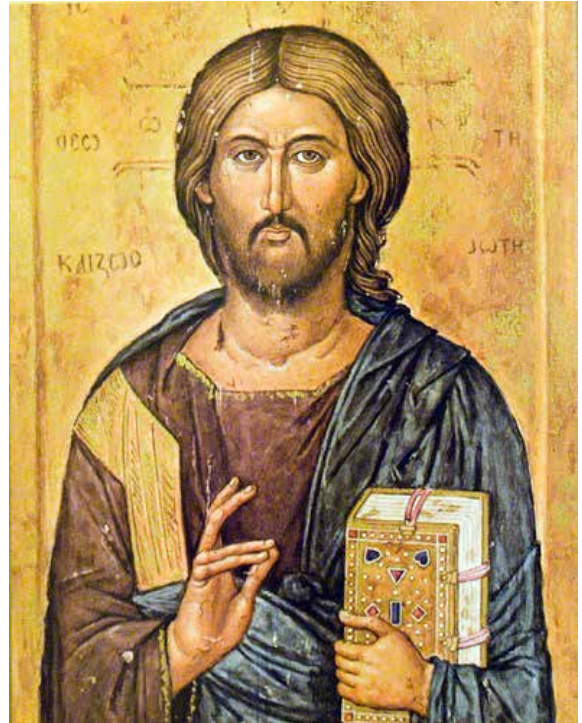
- Many people think they know the Ten Commandments but once put to the test they realize they may not know them as well as they think. Do you know the Ten Commandments in order? Try drawing two tablets and list the appropriate commandments on each of them (hint: it may be easier if you group the commandments with the first three on the left tablet and the other seven on the right). Is there a

commandment you struggled with mentioning? Did the order of the commandments confuse you? Now take time to read these daily to help you solidify your knowledge of them in order. Need help? You can download the Laudate app on your phone and find the Ten Commandments in the “prayers” tab.

- Using this list, consider which commandment you found hardest to uphold this past week. God promises that the commandments will bring us to “abundance of life” (John 10:10). Consider a time when you disobeyed a commandment, and imagine how your life would have been more “fulfilled” if you had obeyed.
- If there was an instance when you failed to uphold a commandment and it hurt someone else, pray for the grace necessary to ask for forgiveness from that person. Also, consider celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the next few weeks.

### For Adults

- Try to list the Ten Commandments by memory and place it somewhere you can reflect on during your prayer time. Read them every day so you keep them in memory throughout our journey this year. If you need help listing them, that is ok! Need help? You can download the Laudate app on your phone and find the Ten Commandments in the “prayers” tab. Or you can find them on USCCB.org. Just search that website for “Ten Commandments”.
- Pray by reading Matthew 19:16–26. Think of what makes you happiest in life. What activities, people, etc., do you go to when you need happiness or fulfillment? Now, like the young man in this Gospel passage, look at the Ten Commandments and point out a practical way that following a particular commandment has brought you joy, happiness, and fulfillment recently. Now do the same, but note how not following a particular commandment has brought you sadness. Try to spend time in prayer each day, asking Jesus for the grace necessary to more faithfully obey that particular commandment.
- Read paragraphs 6–8 of *Veritatis Splendor*. You can access this in your binder provided by the parish or online by searching for “Veritatis Splendor”. As we begin this process of looking more deeply into the Ten Commandments, make the pledge to spend at least five minutes per day in prayer to begin intentionally turning to Jesus, seeking understanding to grow in authentic Christian morality. Daily prayer is the best and most practical way to begin studying and adopting the Ten Commandments into your life.



### For Ministries

Try starting off your ministry meeting this week by praying with Exodus 20:1–20. Pray about how the Lord is calling your ministry to study the commandments over the next few months.

Send out an email to your ministry members about our parish theme, challenge them to attend a weekly catechesis after the Mass they normally attend, or to come to Nick Lebish’s talk on September 26.

Talk about the Rule of Life that’s written up for your ministry, how is that related to the way the Lord gave us the Ten Commandments to live by? Is it time to revise your ministry’s Rule of Life?