



TEN COMMANDMENTS

Ninth Commandment: You shall Not Covet Your Neighbors Wife

REFLECTIONS

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).

Purity of Heart

What is “purity of heart”? The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the heart is the seat of moral personality. “From the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy” (Matthew 15:19). Because humans are composed of both body and soul, there exists a continuous struggle between the two—a struggle which is the consequence of sin. As St. Paul says, “What I do I do not understand. For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want... Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me... For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self, but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members” (Romans 7:15, 17, 22).

Persons who are pure in heart are “those who have attuned their intellects and wills to the demands of God’s holiness, chiefly in three areas: charity, chastity or sexual rectitude, and love of truth and orthodoxy of

faith” (CCC 2518). We are promised that if we do these things, we will see God and be like him. “Even now it enables us to see according to God, to accept others as ‘neighbors’; it lets us perceive the human body—our and our neighbor’s—as a temple of the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of divine beauty” (CCC 2519).

Pursuing Purity

So, if our intentions are pure and we are wanting to do good in the eyes of God, why do we do evil? Are there ways to overcome our tendencies for sin? Through God’s grace and with a regular prayer life, we can strive for purity of heart. The Catechism describes the virtues of modesty—of feelings as well as of body—and temperance. We can also remove ourselves and our family from entertainment that consciously or subconsciously degrades the dignity of a person and caricatures modesty and moral restraint.

“Purification of the heart demands prayer, the practice of chastity, purity of intention and of vision” (CCC2532). It “requires the modesty which is patience, decency, and discretion. Modesty protects the intimate center of the person” (CCC 2533).

Reflections:

- Do you remember to ask for God’s help and grace in your prayers, or do you attempt to conquer sinful tendencies on your own?
- Consider your first reaction to the words: modesty, chastity, temperance. Do they seem old-fashioned to you, or even ‘out of step with the times’? Are you able to make the words part of your life?
- Consider the differences between a man sketching a nude female model in art class and a man looking at Playboy magazine. How are they different?
- How do men and women encourage modesty and immodesty in the fashion industry? Review the clothing in your and your children’s closet again.



ACTIVITIES

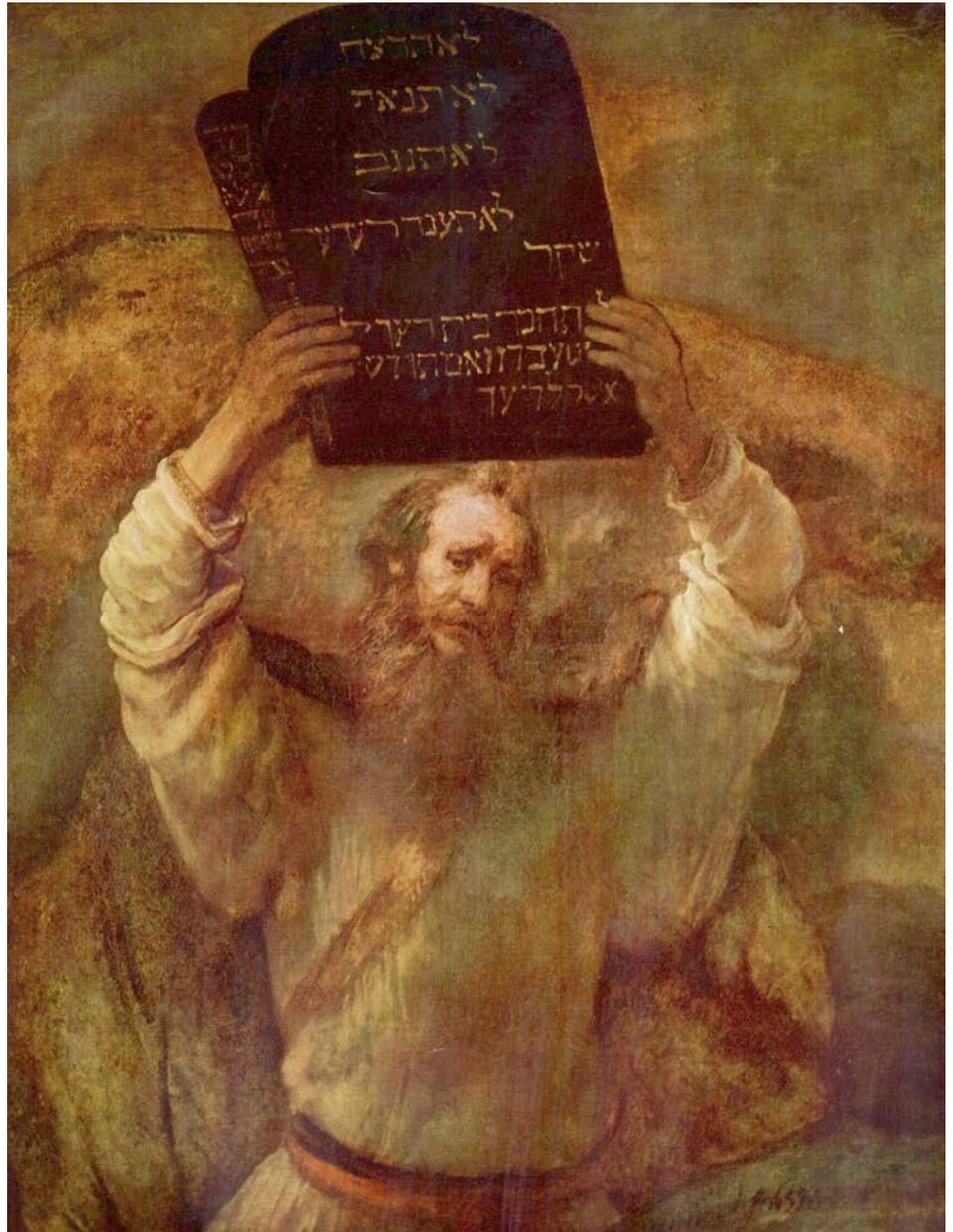
For Children and Families

For Families:

1. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure of heart: they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). What does it mean to “see God”? Read aloud Exodus 33:7–11. What happened? What did you hear? Read aloud 1 Kings 19:9–13. Tell what you heard. Moses and Elijah both had an experience of seeing God. Now read Matthew 17:1–8. Share what strikes or touches you about this passage. Through Jesus Christ, it is now possible for us to have an experience of seeing God. How do you understand this? Share your personal experience

2. Read aloud Mark 7:14–23. Jesus wants us to listen. What do you hear? What stands out to you in this passage? When scripture is proclaimed, God speaks in an intimate way to those who are listening, helping us in the situations that we face in our life today. Sometimes God, in his faithful love and mercy, calls us to repentance and conversion, speaking to us through scripture in a way that admonishes or corrects us when our lives are moving in a direction that is leading us away from him. What does society and the world around us say about the things that defile us? Think about your family, friends, school, work, TV, news, social media, entertainment, etc. What do you say?

3. Read aloud Ezekiel 36: 23–28. What do you hear? The opposite of impurity is holiness. How does this word of God speak to your life today? God has acted in the lives of the people



Moses with the Ten Commandments, Rembrandt, 1659

of Israel and scripture relates this history of salvation. God has also acted and intervened in each of our lives, creating a “history of salvation” with each of us. How does this word of God speak to your experiences in the past? Through the commandments, God has made a covenant with his people, Israel, calling them to holiness. This covenant is handed over to us, having been fulfilled in the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For Children:

1. Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure of heart: they shall see God.” In the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah see God. Read or have someone read aloud: Matthew 17:1–8. Listen closely, then talk about and draw a picture of what happened. Write or dictate a few sentences about what you heard and drew.

2. Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. These gifts help us to live the Christian life. Choose one gift and, with the help of your parents, learn more about it. Say, write or dictate a letter to Jesus, telling him why you need this gift in your life today or how you feel that you have received this gift and how it has helped you. This letter is your prayer.

3. God has called the people of Israel to be his own. At one time, God dwelt for them in the Temple in Jerusalem. Now, God no longer dwells in the Temple in Jerusalem. God now dwells in his kingdom. Where is the kingdom of God? Jesus says, “The kingdom of God is within you.”

Saint Paul asks us, “Do you not realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you and whom you received from God?” As fruit grows on a tree, with the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, you may begin to show the fruits of the Holy Spirit in your life. Saint Paul says that those fruits are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.” Choose one of these fruits of the Holy Spirit. Tell about, draw, and write or dictate a few sentences about yourself showing this fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life. Tell about and show what you would say and do. Have you witnessed this fruit in someone else’s life? Tell about, draw, and write or dictate a few sentences about what they have done or said. Repeat this activity with the other fruits.

For Youth

1. The Ninth Commandment protects us against inappropriate and impure thoughts and desires. These are dangerous because they can lead us to grave sins. God protects us by encouraging us to guard ourselves in our thoughts, before they become actions. Take time to write down ways in which you are tempted in your thoughts most often.

2. Then read the Gospel from the First

Purity of heart will enable us to see God; it enables us even now to see things according to God (CCC 2531).

Sunday of Lent (Matthew 4:1–11). How did Jesus respond to Temptation? What can you learn from this in your own fight against temptation?

3. Come up with a sort prayer such as “Come Lord Jesus”, or “Jesus, I Love You”, that you can say when you are tempted to inappropriate or impure thoughts and actions. A short prayer like this can be very powerful in our struggle against Satan!

For Young Adults

1. Read Mark 7:14–23. Reflect on your own interior struggles. Perhaps you need to grow in patience, chastity, or kindness. Identify a particular virtue and spend time in prayer, asking God to increase His grace surrounding that virtue in you.

2. Begin performing an examination of conscience every night. Go through

your day and think of the ways Satan has attempted to tempt you away from charity and chastity. How do you react in these situations? How do you succeed? What leads to your failure? Realizing this helps you grow and prepare for upcoming struggles.

3. Reflect on Genesis 1:26–27. Does meditating on the fact that all human persons are made in the image and likeness of God affect how you guard yourself against impure thoughts? Spend time training yourself to see

the presence of God in other people instead of seeing them as objects. This takes practice, but is possible with God’s grace and a conscience movement of your will.

For Adults

1. Read 1 Corinthians 6:18–20. How does St. Paul challenge us to grow in holiness? It is difficult to control or guard our thoughts because of our



Binoculars for Bird Watching, Marion Lewis, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

fallen nature, but God gives us His grace to help us further unite with Him. Think of the times where you have fallen in guarding your thoughts. What led you to this point? How can you better protect yourself next time?

2. Temptations in our thoughts are inevitable. Satan can manipulate our emotions, but not our intellects (our reason). Begin each day by praying the Parish Stewardship Prayer (to find it online search for the *Suscipe* by St. Ignatius). This prayer consecrates our entire being, especially our intellects and wills, to the glory of God.

3. Read paragraph 26 of *Veritatis Splendor*. Saint John Paul II encourages us to keep our faith life and our personal life united. The same can be

said for our actions and our thoughts. We must keep our “mind’s eye”, our interior life, focused on God always. We do this by practicing prayer. During Lent, consider building more silence in your day. Perhaps when you drive to work, turn off the radio and sit in the presence of God who promises to be with you always.

For Ministry Leaders

1. This commandment continues the theme of how we should be treating our neighbor. The commandment zeros in on respecting and not coveting your neighbor’s wife. It’s a call to striving for purity of heart.

2. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 2531 it says that



Tom Sad, Tom Gazpacho, CC BY-ND 2.0

“purity of heart will enable us to see God: it enables us even now to see things according to God.” Take a moment to reflect on ways you should be purifying your heart. Then read from the beatitudes, Matthew 5: 3–12 and apply the lessons to your ministry.

3. Pray in a special way for those who do not believe in the importance of modesty and its role in having a pure heart.



Moses Descending from Mt. Sinai, Gustave Doré

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