



# TEN COMMANDMENTS

*Tenth Commandment: You shall Not Covet Your Neighbors Goods*



## REFLECTIONS

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Mt 6:21).*

The Tenth Commandment concerns the intentions of the heart. Along with the Ninth Commandment, it summarizes all the precepts of the Law. It forbids coveting the goods of another, which is the root of theft, robbery, and fraud (i.e. the Seventh Commandment. It leads to violence and injustice (Fifth Commandment). It originates in the idolatry prohibited by the first three Commandments (CCC 2534).

### “Lust of the Eyes”

As humans, we desire things that look and feel good—good food, fashionable clothes, fancy and fast cars, admittance to a prestigious university. There is nothing inherently wrong with any of these things. But desiring them beyond the boundaries of good reason leads to coveting, greed, avarice, injustice, and possibly harming our neighbor to acquire them. The first of the Beatitudes of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount concerns “poverty of spirit.” It proclaims that poverty of spirit will enable us to see God and leads us to a life of freedom and joy.

Poverty of spirit moves us toward adopting a simplicity of life that frees us from consumerism and helps us to preserve God’s creation (CCA, p. 450). Envy and greed live together, causing us to be sad at the good fortune others, developing a darkness in our being that turns us away from God and toward the idols of our desires.

### Generosity of Heart

Faithful Christians are to “direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect charity by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches which is contrary to the spirit of evangelical poverty” (*Lumen Gentium* 42.3). St. Peter states, “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10).

What is a steward? Is it just someone who tithes to the Church? Being a Christian steward is more than giving treasure and time to the Church. As Christian stewards, we receive God’s gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord (CCA p. 450). We are called to be a disciple of



Jesus, putting him first before anything or anyone.

## Reflections

- What can we do to be free of exaggerated dependence on material goods? What are you doing now? Can you do more?
- What do you tell yourself when you begin to envy what another person has? How do you respond when someone is envious of you?
- Consider how the media contributes to the consumerism attitude, and over-attachments to wealth?
- How do you use your unique gifts for helping others? Do you respond generously when there is a need?

# ACTIVITIES

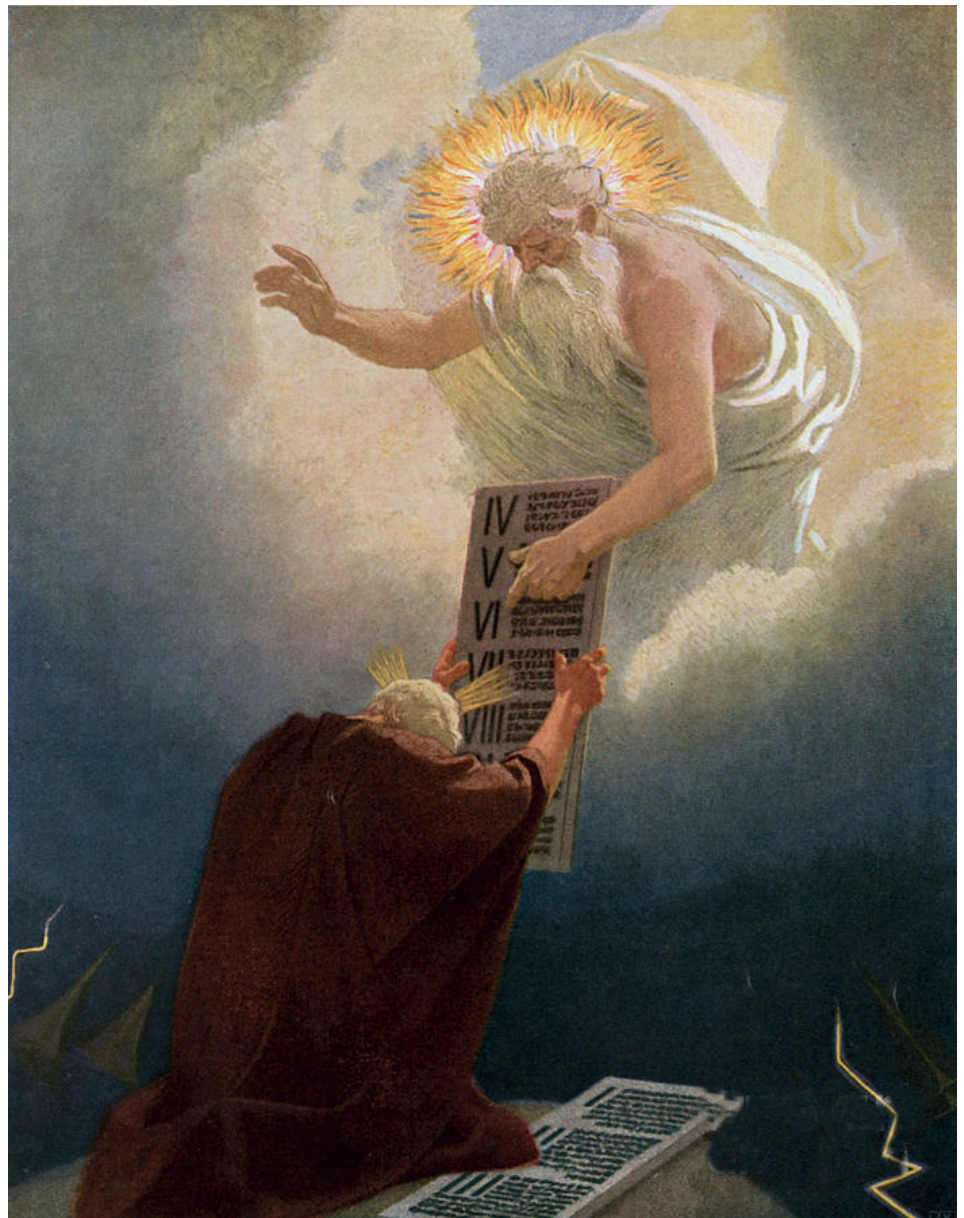
## For Children and Families

### *For Families:*

1. Read aloud Numbers 11:4–34. What happened? What did you hear? How did this strike you? At the heart of covetousness is idolatry, which is addressed in the first three Commandments. For the people of Israel, all the sins committed in the desert are rooted in covetousness. To which sins does covetousness lead us?
2. Read aloud Luke 12:13–34. The scriptures are divine revelation. This is a beautiful and strong word of God for us. What do you hear? How is God speaking to you in the circumstances of your life today?
3. Read aloud Ephesians 4:17–5:20. St. Paul is speaking to a Christian community, calling them to conversion and encouraging them in the way of Christian life. In your life today, how does this word of God call you to conversion? How does it encourage you?

### *For Children:*

1. Jesus Christ says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The tenth commandment calls for a proper desire for what is needed and necessary, avoiding the sins of greed and envy, particularly regarding those things that belong to others. With the help of your parents, talk about, write or dictate, and/or draw a list (or create a poster) of things that you believe are needed and necessary in our life. We can say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for giving us what we need.



2. Jesus says, “Love one another as I have loved you.” With our desire and God’s grace, it is possible to defeat the sins of greed and envy with heartfelt charity and goodwill toward others, in regard to both their possessions and their accomplishments. Can we sincerely rejoice in the good of others? Tell about, then draw a picture of a time when you have demonstrated sincere charity and goodwill toward someone, especially when it involved their achievements, accomplishments,

or possessions. Write or dictate a few sentences to tell about it.

3. The sin of coveting is rooted in the sins of pride and selfishness. Coveting, which can include a strong desire for something that belongs to someone else, can lead to jealousy or envy, anger, stealing, greed, and other sins. We begin to think that having more, increasing our possessions, even at the expense of other people, will make us happy. In these situations of sin,



however, we find that the opposite is true: we begin to feel sad, afraid, frustrated and unhappy.

4. God the Father loves us, and he wants us to be happy. He knows our situations of temptation and sin, and he is merciful. Jesus, who leads us to God's forgiveness and love, says, "If anyone wishes to be first in the kingdom of God, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." The Holy Spirit comes to help us. With the assistance of your parents, discover the meaning of two words that describe Christian forms of love, *agape* and *caritas*. On a calendar or in a journal, record by writing, dictating, and/or drawing about each day that you are able to demonstrate these forms of love and service toward others in words and/or actions.

#### For Youth

1. The Tenth Commandment protects us against coveting and envy. Coveting is our desire to take or to keep unjustly what belongs to others. Envy results from coveting. Envy is a "deadly" sin, in that it destroys God's gift of charity

and His grace inside of us! Envy results when we not only covet another person's goods, but we also experience sadness at someone else's gifts or success. The opposite virtues that destroys envy and coveting behavior is Charity. Charity is not just giving to the poor, but it actually is willing the good of another person out of love. Reflect for a moment, how do you practice charity in your life?

2. Take time to think of something you really, really want. Maybe it's a new tech device, a new video game, or whatever. Now imagine you had the opportunity to receive that gift. Would you give that gift to one of your friends instead? How difficult would this be? Part of growing in charity, and getting rid of envy in our lives, is practicing it! Think of a way you can grow in charity (willing the good of another person) by sacrificing something.

3. All of the commandments have the final goal of drawing us closer to God and obeying His will for us. We trust that God wants nothing but the best for us. All we have to do is follow His will. Read John 14:15. How

has this experience of learning the Ten Commandments with the parish inspired you to love Jesus more?

#### For Young Adults:

1. The Tenth Commandment directs us towards charity (willing the good of another person). This takes sacrifice because our natural inclination is to take care of ourselves. Charity is more than just giving alms to the poor. So how can you go beyond just simple almsgiving, and really sacrifice something in your life for another person to grow in charity?

2. Think of what you find yourself envying the most in other people. Perhaps it is money, success, fame, power, easiness of life, etc. Now reflect on the fact that Jesus promises none of these things to His followers. Read Luke 12:13–21. What can you remove from your life during the remaining Lenten season that is unnecessary to your salvation? How can you replace this thing with something that is necessary for your salvation such as prayer, meditation, the sacraments, etc?

#### For Adults:

Read 1 Timothy 6:7–10. St. Paul has strong words for the faithful. Reflect more closely on verse 7. Part of avoiding envy and covetousness in our life is growing in charity and humility. In order to grow in Charity (a theological virtue that is given to us by God), means we have to first recognize our own unworthiness. Every blessing in our lives is from God. We do not need/deserve anything but God blesses us anyway because He provides for us





as a Father. Bring this to prayer and contemplate how Mary models perfect humility, how Christ showed humility to the point of obedience on the cross, and ask your Father in heaven to provide more opportunities for you to grow in humility.

Read Luke 12:22–34. If there was any doubt as to God’s faithfulness towards us, Jesus heals us from that doubt in this passage. Reflect on your journey through the Ten Commandments with the parish. Has your perspective on the commandments changed at all? How would you explain to a friend or family member who sees the commandments as “laws” and “commands” by a God who wants to just keep us in line? The commandments lead us to freedom for love of God and love of neighbor. Ask God for the faith necessary to obey His

commands and to respond to them with love (John 14:15).

*For Ministry Leaders:*

1. This Tenth Commandment continues and completes the previous commandment. This commandment focuses on respecting and not coveting your neighbor’s possessions. Which begs an interior attitude of respect for other’s goods.
2. Encourage your ministry members to meditate with Matthew 6:19–21. Take a moment to think about where your treasure is and where it should be.
3. This commandment also helps us to focus on desires, are they oriented properly? Do our desires point towards things that others have or towards

desiring things that will make us holier people? Remember that the greatest human desire is to see God the “one who created us out of love and draws us to himself with infinite love” (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 533).

4. During times of crisis it’s especially important to be grateful for what we have been given, to focus on that rather than being distracted and wanting what others have.

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