



TEN COMMANDMENTS

Seventh Commandment: You shall Not steal



REFLECTIONS

What do you possess that you have not received? 1 Corinthians 4:7

For the Good of All

The Seventh Commandment forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of one's neighbor and wronging him in any way with respect to his goods. It commands justice and charity in the care of earthly goods and the fruits of men's labor. For the sake of the common good, it requires respect for the universal destination of goods and respect for the right to private property. Christian life strives to order this world's goods to God and to fraternal charity (CCC 2401).



Stealing Grapes, Cipriano Dei, 19th Century

In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labor, and enjoy the fruits. The goods of creation are for the whole human race. Owning property and goods is legitimate for guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of persons and for helping each of them to provide for his basic needs and those "in his charge" (CCC 2402). "In his use of things man should regard the external goods he legitimately owns not merely as exclusive to himself

but common to others also, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as himself (*Gaudium et Spes* 69.1).

Practicing the virtue of Temperance with regard to our acquiring and using money, goods, and property ensures that we care for our neighbors who live close by and those that live in other parts of the world through sharing what we have; it provides for those generations that come after us. We are obliged to use in moderation

what we keep or own, material or immaterial, in ways that will benefit the greatest number, reserving the better parts for guests, for the sick and the poor (CCC 2405). "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food must do likewise" (Luke 3:11). Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use (CCC 2444). St. John Chrysostom writes that "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and

deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs” (*Hom. in Lazaro* 2, 5).

The Good of Work

The development of economic activity and growth in production are meant to provide for the needs of human beings. Economic life is not meant solely to multiply goods produced and increase profit or power; it is ordered first of all to the service of person, of the whole man, and of the entire human community (CCC2426).

Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another. (*Gaudium et Spes* 34). Hence, work is a duty: “If any one will not work, let him not eat” (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Work honors the Creator’s gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in His redemptive work (CCC 2427).

Reflections

The Seventh Commandment charges us to respect the integrity of creation— mineral, vegetable, and animal resources— for the common good of past, present, and future of humanity. Consider how you and your family balance having “dominion over the earth” (Gen 1:28–30) and responsibly caring for creation.



Thou Shalt Not Steal, John Singer Sargent, 1918

ACTIVITIES

For Families and Children

For Families:

1. Read aloud: Luke 19:1–10. Tell what you heard. Where do you see yourself in this scripture passage? How does this speak to you in your life today? Discuss the reasons or motives that drive people to steal.

2. Read aloud: Matthew 5:33–48. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching his disciples about the life they will lead, later called Christian life. Discuss these questions with your family: What does the world around us say about these situations and actions? What do you say? Is this way of living possible without the help of the Holy Spirit?

Here is a prayer before beginning your work day, or when the day is especially difficult or trying for you:

God, our Father, work is Your gift to us. A call to reach new heights by using our talents for the good of all. Guide us as we work, and teach us to live in the Spirit that has made us Your sons and daughters, in the love that has made us brothers and sisters. Grant this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

What talents and skills has God given you? Consider how you can help more people with your gifts—perhaps by volunteering in the parish with the elderly or Mother of Mercy Ministry, or with Catholic Charities.

To Go Deeper

- Social doctrine of the Church, social justice, and solidarity among nations: CCC pg 582-586.
- The dignity of work: *Centesimus annus*, Pope John Paul II, 1991.
- The essential role of the laity using their gifts for Christian service: *Apostolicam actuositatem*, Pope Paul VI, 1965

3. Read aloud: Matthew 6:19–34. How has this scripture been fulfilled in Jesus Christ? How is this scripture being fulfilled in your life today?

For Children:

4. The seventh commandment forbids taking or keeping the possessions of one’s neighbor or wronging him in any

way with respect to his possessions. Christian life strives toward charity. With this belief, we show respect for others and their property in our thoughts, words, and actions. Keep a calendar or journal, recording by writing and/or drawing each day one way in which you have demonstrated respect toward others, especially toward their property and possessions.



5. Charity, love and respect toward our neighbor are virtues of the Christian life. Jesus identifies himself with the poor, the sick and those in need. He says, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.” Keep a calendar or journal (see above), recording by writing and/or drawing ways in which you have demonstrated love and charity, especially toward those who are in need.

6. The sins of selfishness, pride, greed, jealousy, and envy can lead to stealing or disrespecting another’s property.

Jesus says, “Take care to guard against all greed... one’s life does not consist of possessions.” Tell, then write or dictate and draw a picture, about a time when you shared something of yours with a friend or with someone in your family. Tell about how you felt. How did the other person feel? On a separate paper, repeat the activity, telling about a time someone shared with you.

For Youth:

1. The Seventh Commandment is “You Shall Not Steal.” Jesus teaches us to trust that He will care for our needs. We do not need more than what He gives us and we can always trust that He will provide. This commandment warns against us from not only stealing what belongs to others, but also reminds us to not desire more than what God has given us. Write down 10 things in your life that you are thankful God has given you. This could be people or possessions.

2. Read John 19:23–24. Think about how Our Lord suffered in His Passion from those who broke the

commandments. The soldiers in this story steal from Christ and try to make money off of his belongings. How should the soldiers have obeyed the commandments in this situation?

3. When we sin by stealing, we don’t always steal possessions. We can also steal someone else’s happiness or confidence by making fun of them or gossiping. Think of a time when you were guilty of stealing, whether a possession or disposition. How can you restore what you stole from them?

For Young Adults:

1. Think of a time when you have been ungrateful to God for the gifts He has given you. When did you desire to take a gift from God from someone else and have it for your own? Spend time in prayer, preferably in front of the Blessed Sacrament, as a “thank you” for the time God has given you in this life.

2. Read Mark 10:17–31. Reflect on the difference between what the world sees as “success” and what God sees as “success”. You may not be called to sell all of your possessions but what is something that you enjoy that you can sacrifice to help your pursuit of holiness.

3. Sometimes we steal from people in ways we don’t even realized. Think of a way that you can add to someone else’s life instead of stealing. Perhaps this can come in the form of giving your time or even just giving someone a compliment and praying for that person.

Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God...

For Adults:

1. Read Ephesians 4:25–32. While we may not always steal another person's possessions, we can steal other things from that person including their peace and joy. Reflect on a time when your selfish behavior may have stolen someone else's peace. How can you make reparation for this?

2. We should obviously not steal from our neighbors but are we ever guilty from stealing from God? Sometimes we steal from God that which He is due, such as our worship, devotion, or even our "first fruits." How can you give back to God for those times when you put other things in place of Him? Consider making a special sacrifice to God. This could be a sacrifice from your time, talent, or treasure, and is just to make a small reparation to Him.

3. Read Luke 12:22–34. Take time to reflect on God's providence in your life. When we steal or covet from others we are trying to fill a void in ourselves. Instead, we need to learn to trust that God gives each of us all that we need to gain eternal salvation.

Does this change your perspective on worrisome situations in your life? Spend time in prayer each day asking God to increase your faith and reliance on Him. Remember, God will never be outdone in generosity!

For Ministry Leaders

1. When we usually think of "you shall not steal" that's where we think the commandment ends, but it is so much more! This commandment is also about being good stewards of the gifts we've been given, about respect for fellow man, and love for the poor.

2. Reflect on this explanation of the meaning of work found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2427: "Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another." In working we are following God's plan for us and helping to continue the work of Adam of subduing and caring for the Earth. Pray about that idea with your ministry.

3. Do you encourage your fellow ministry members in respecting the goods others possess? Do you thank them for using their God given gifts for the service of others?

4. Pray in a special way for those who cannot find work and for their families.

5. Reflect on the corporeal works of mercy, which so many of our ministries do so well! If you're not involved in a ministry, consider trying out one of our many outreach ministries. We have all kinds, ranging from our Parish Pantry, Habitat for Humanity, Mother of Mercy, St. Vincent de Paul, Stephen Ministry and more!



We invite you to listen to our parish podcast "Gratia Plena: A St. Mary Podcast" available on our website, Apple and Google Podcasts, and Spotify!