



# TEN COMMANDMENTS

*Eighth Commandment: You shall Not Bear False Witness*



## REFLECTIONS

*A life as the children of God. It is a life that we do not know but of which we have a vital need and a very deep and unexpressed desire... The Eighth Commandment invites us, in this perspective, to consider the problem of truth in a more complete and existential way: it is not just a question of telling the truth but of being true, of bearing witness with all that we are and do in favor of the goodness and love of God the Father (from "Why Focus on the Ten Commandments?", P. Adolfo Scandurra, o.c.d., 2016).*

### Bearing Witness to the Truth

God's Word is Truth—He is the source of all truth, and how we live attests to that. In Jesus Christ, the whole of God's truth has been made manifest. (CCC 2466). Man's nature gravitates to the truth; civilizations assume and depend on people speaking the truth. However, beyond speaking the truth, our character can be judged on how we live the truth. We understand the old saying, "actions speak louder than words." How we truly live lets those around us know that they can depend on what we espouse to believe—we are a witness to our own beliefs. "If we say that we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not

live according to the truth" 1 John 1:6.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church discusses the many ways that the Eighth Commandment touches our lives. In addition to telling a falsehood, we may be guilty of:

- Rash judgement—assuming the worst of someone without sufficient foundation
- Detraction—disclosing the faults of someone without valid reason
- Bragging
- Irony—malicious caricaturing the behavior of another
- Harming the reputation of another

### Reflections

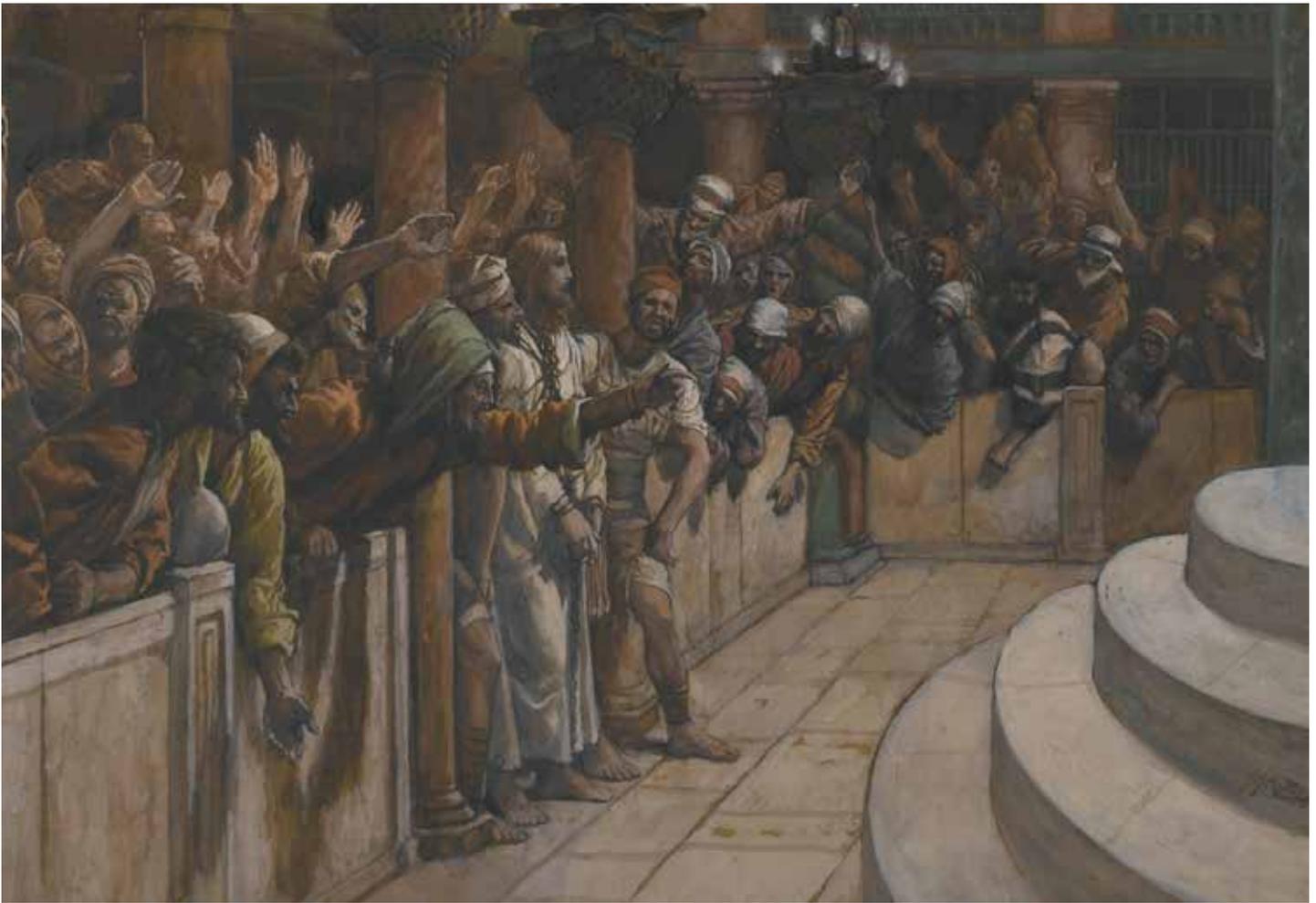
- How often do I mock or mimic someone while treating my words as a joke?
- Do I like to be considered "in the know" by revealing personal things about another?
- Do I sincerely decide to make my own judgement about another even after someone spoke of their faults?

### Truth, Beauty, and Sacred Art

Truth carries with it the joy and splendor of spiritual beauty. Truth is beautiful in itself. There is truth in



words, but truth can also find other means of human expression. "When it is a matter of evoking what is beyond words: the depths of the human heart, the exaltations of the soul, the mystery of God. Even before revealing himself to man in words of truth, God reveals himself to him through the universal language of creation, the work of this Word, of his wisdom: the order and harmony of the cosmos – which both the child and the scientist discover..." (CCC 2500).



False Witnesses, James Tissot, 1886–1894

Mother Church has a tradition, a history of fostering and caring for the fine arts, especially sacred art, because of how they lift our minds and souls to God who inspires the creation of all beauty through human hands. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, devotes two chapters to sacred art (“... the single aim of turning men’s minds devoutly toward God”), sacred music (“the purpose of sacred music, which is the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful”), and sacred furnishings (“should worthily and beautifully serve the dignity of worship”).

### Reflections

- Does my home contain sacred artwork to contemplate?
- Do I have talent in creating something beautiful, perhaps

painting, sculpture, or even gardening or decorating cakes?

- Do I thank God for my special skill?
- How do I share my skill with others and use it to foster His Kingdom?

## ACTIVITIES

### For Children and Families

#### *For Families:*

1. Read aloud: James 3:1–12. Tell what you heard. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “Do not judge...” (Matthew 7:1). Judging others is a sin. St. Augustine says that most of the time we are incorrect when we think we know people’s intentions for what they say and do. Discuss reasons that we judge others. Is it possible that,

instead of judging, we make “excuses” for the other person? Is there an opportunity today to ask someone for forgiveness for judging them?

2. Read aloud: Sirach 5:12–6:1. Tell what you heard. How is God speaking to you in your life today? Consider gossiping: what motivates people to engage in gossip? What are the consequences of gossip? What reparation is possible toward someone who is hurt by gossip?

3. Read aloud: John 8:31–36. Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” The Spirit of truth will guide believers to all truth. The believer, who walks in the truth, is sanctified by the truth. He co-operates with the truth, accomplishes the truth and witnesses to the truth. Discuss what it means to

be “in the truth,” to be a slave to sin and what it means to be free.

For Children:

1. Jesus Christ says, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” St. Paul says that we have “put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” Truthfulness consists of showing oneself true in our words and actions. Truthfulness includes respect for the reputation and honor of other persons. Keep a calendar or journal, recording by writing and/or drawing each day one way in which you have demonstrated truthfulness in words and/or actions, including respect for other persons.

2. God, our Creator and Father, is the source of all truth. Our human nature leads toward a desire for truthfulness in our words and actions as we interact with others. As children of God, the eighth commandment forbids lying in our relations with others. Lying is a sin, and there are consequences for our sins. Tell about a time when you experienced the consequences of lying. What happened? How did you feel? How did the others involved feel? Was there an opportunity to make up for, correct, or seek forgiveness for the hurt that was done?

3. Jesus says, “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you.” Tell, then write or dictate and draw a picture, about a time when you were truthful in your words and/or actions 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 was truthful with you.

## For Youth

1. The eighth commandment is Thou shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. In other words, we should not lie about or spread rumors about our other people. It hurts when others talk bad about us, gossip or judge us. It also is sinful to judge ourselves too harshly. Write down 5 things about yourself that you are proud of or even what others say they admire about you.

2. Read Ephesians 5:29–32. Think about your family and friends. Have they ever said something that hurt you? Have you ever said something that hurt them? St. Paul says that we are to be “united” as if we were One Body in Christ and we need to “build others up”. If someone hurt you spend a week praying for that person and for your healing every day. If you have hurt others by your words, pray to God for the courage to ask for their forgiveness and then do just that.

3. Pick a family member or friend and write down five things about them that you admire and recognize as God’s presence in them. Share that list with them this week.

## For Young Adults

1. Read Catechism paragraphs 2493-2499. You can search for these paragraphs on the internet if you don’t own a Catechism. Reflect on your use of social media and the internet. Where have you failed to build others up instead of participating in gossip or slander?

2. Read John 8:42–47. Satan only speaks in lies and one of the most effective ways he tempts us away from virtue is to get us to believe that we are worthless. We should not bear false

witness against ourselves either. Make a list of 5-10 things that you or others admire in you. Spend time in prayer thanking God for the gifts He has given you.

3. Sit down and reflect on how Christ forgave others who mistreated Him. This is perfect charity. As we celebrate Lent what can you do to each day to grow in this mercy and forgiveness? The first step can be to go to confession for the times when you have hurt others instead of practicing charity.

## For Adults

1. Read Matthew 5:33–37. In this passage Jesus warns us about making oaths that we cannot fulfill. In the end, we need God’s help to really accomplish anything of benefit in our lives. Reflect on the oaths that God calls us to make (love God and your neighbor) and compare that against the oaths that the world calls us to (wealth, fame, power). How can you stay faithful and grow in the covenant that was established with God in your Baptism?

2. Matthew 15:19 says, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.” Jesus warns us that our interior dispositions quickly lead to more serious exterior sins. Focus more on your thoughts this week. How do you initially react to adversity or problematic people? Try to turn your first thoughts in these situations be to invite God in, instead of judging or growing angry with others.

3. During the Lenten season, contemplate on Christ as the Truth. He is the definitive Word of God and He Himself said He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. How does acknowledging Christ as the Truth in your life change



*Jesús en Casa de Anás, José de Madrazo, 1803*

how you approach His teachings and His Church? How does this impact how you make decisions? How does every word and example of Christ in the Gospels lead others to life? How can you lead others to life?

### **For Ministry Leaders**

1. The catechism of the Catholic Church builds this section from our duty to truth, to what violates the commandment, and then goes on to a focus on truth with relation to beauty and sacred art.

2. All people have this duty to spread the truth. Spend some time praying as a group with John 14:1-8, focus on the

phrase Jesus speaks “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

3. Start a meeting off by reading and praying with this excerpt from the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 2500: “Truth can also find other complementary forms of human expression, above all when it is a matter of evoking what is beyond words: the depths of the human heart, the exaltations of the soul, the mystery of God. Even before revealing himself to man in words of truth, God reveals himself to him through the universal language of creation, the work of his Word, of his wisdom: the order and harmony of the cosmos—which both the child and the scientist discover.”

4. Truth can be expressed through the beauty of sacred art. The art then leads us to contemplating the wonder and beauty of God. Pray in a special way for Fr. Ioan as he labors to add beautiful sacred art to our worship space.

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!

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