



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. Revealing God's Law Texts from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

JESUS AND THE COMMANDMENTS

“Teacher, what must I do...?”

“Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?” To the young man who asked this question, Jesus answers first by invoking the necessity to recognize God as the “One there is who is good”, as the supreme Good and the source of all good. Then Jesus tells him: “If you would enter life, keep the commandments”. And he cites for his questioner the precepts that concern love of neighbour: “You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honour your father and mother.” Finally, Jesus sums up these commandments positively: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (Mt 19:16-19) (2052)

Following Jesus involves keeping the commandments

To this first reply Jesus adds a second: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” (Mt 19:21) This reply does not do away with the first: following Jesus Christ involves keeping the Commandments. The Law has not been abolished, but rather man is invited to rediscover it in the person of his Master who is its perfect fulfilment. In the three synoptic Gospels, Jesus’ call to the rich young man to follow him, in the obedience of a disciple and in the observance of the Commandments, is joined to the call to poverty and chastity. The evangelical counsels are inseparable from the Commandments. (2053)

The power of the Spirit at work in the letter

Jesus acknowledged the Ten Commandments, but he also showed the power of the Spirit at work in their letter. He preached a “righteousness [which] exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees” (Mt 5:20) as well as that of the Gentiles. He unfolded all the demands of the Commandments. “You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill’... But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgement.” (Mt 5:21-22) (2054)

The twofold yet single commandment of love

When someone asks him, “Which commandment in the Law is the greatest?” (Mt 22:36) Jesus replies: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets.” (Mt 22:37-40) The Decalogue must be interpreted in the light of this twofold yet single commandment of love, the fullness of the Law:

“The commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Rom 13: 9-10) (2055)

WHAT ARE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

Exodus 20:2-17

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who keep my commandments.

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

Deuteronomy 5:6-21

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods before me...

A Traditional Catechetical Formula

1. I am the LORD your God:

You shall not have strange gods before me.

2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

Exodus 20:2-17

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

You shall not kill.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbour's.

Deuteronomy 5:6-21

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...

Honour your father and your mother...

You shall not kill.

Neither shall you commit adultery.

Neither shall you steal.

Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbour.

Neither shall you covet your neighbour's wife...

You shall not desire anything that is your neighbour's...

A Traditional Catechetical Formula

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

4. Honour your father and your mother.

5. You shall not kill.

6. You shall not commit adultery.

7. You shall not steal.

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

9. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.

10. You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.



IN BRIEF

- “What good deed must I do, to have eternal life?” - “If you would enter into life, keep the commandments” (Mt 19:16-17). (2075)
- By his life and by his preaching Jesus attested to the permanent validity of the Decalogue. (2076)

