



We make a turn now in our catechesis on the Ten Commandments. On the last two Sundays I've covered the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Commandments. These three have to do directly with our relationship with God. Commandments 4 through 10 have to do with loving our neighbor.

Maybe you've noticed so far that not only does each commandment instruct us about what we should and shouldn't do, but also through these commandments God reveals something about Himself or His plan of creation.

In the 4th Commandment, "Honor your mother and your father," God reveals His plan for marriage and the family. The family, strictly speaking, is a man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children. The family is the God-given original cell of life in society. The family is the most fundamental building block of society. Its primary purpose is the good of the spouses, to become the self-giving persons they were created to be, and the procreation and education of children; that is, through the family new life is brought into the world and are formed to take their proper place in the human fabric.

In order for the family to be what God created it to be, He established it with a certain order within it. That basic order is that He gives parents authority over their children. He gives parents this authority so those children may be properly formed. Through the family children grow in moral values, they begin to honor God and they learn to make good use of the freedom God has given them.

Because of this, God has made it so that children are to give their parents three things:

- 1) **Gratitude** for giving them life and love, and for sustaining their life.
- 2) **True Docility:** They are to listen to their parents and act in accord with their wishes.
- 3) **Obedience:** Unless parents ask them to do something immoral, children are to follow their parents' instructions.

Incidentally, once a child becomes an adult – which in our culture we recognize as being about 18 years old and living on one's own – the nature of living out the relationship changes. Although a child always owes their parents love, respect, and gratitude, they are no longer bound by the same kind of obedience they were as a child. They become their own person.

What kinds of sins would be grave violations of this commandment?

1. Failing to make sure that a parent is taken care of when they are old or sick.
2. Disobedience that causes grave harm to the family.
3. Parents who grossly neglect their duty as a parent.

Kids need parents that will be parents:

- To teach them right from wrong;
- To show them how to love God and others;
- Not to be afraid to discipline them;
- To keep them away from harmful things, harmful people, and harmful situations, no matter how difficult it is to do.

Let's move on to the next one which we all know: "You shall not kill."

God reveals to us the sacredness of all human life and of course we all know the obvious ways that this commandment is violated: murder, abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide. But there are some ways to violate this commandment that many of us do not realize.

1. Spreading Gossip – If you kill a person's reputation, you take their life from them. It is a grave sin if it does grave harm.

There are two kinds of gossip:

Slander is the spreading of something bad that is not true.

Detraction is the spreading of something bad about a person that is true.

So even if something bad is true about another, we don't have the right to spread it around unless it is in a situation where we have a duty to tell it, for example, to the police or authority figure.

2. How we treat our own bodies falls under this commandment – Drunkenness is a grave sin to the point of being out of control of yourself. Illicit drug use is a grave sin. Overeating falls under this.
3. Speeding recklessly is a grave sin. It puts ourselves and others in grave danger.
4. Scandal is a sin against this commandment. Our attitude or behavior that leads others to do evil is a sin.
5. Hatred of another which includes deliberately wishing them evil.
6. Self-mutilation which includes excessive tattooing and excessive or harmful body piercing.
7. Bigotry.

Now when I taught these commandments at Bishop Dwenger, it was about at this point that the students started saying, "Stop! Just Stop! Don't tell me any more! Everything I do is evil!" And I said, "Yes, that's why we need a Savior."

In today's first reading, God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, and He was getting Moses ready to go back to Egypt. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt and God wished to free them from that slavery through Moses. When we sin, especially if we have habits of these sins, we become slaves. God does not want us to be slaves. He wants us to be free. That is why it is important that we look at these things, so that we see clearly the evil that we do and are capable of. Then we can repent and be freed by God's mercy and live more fully the freedom of the children of God.

**Fr. Mark Gurtner at St. Anthony de Padua Church, South Bend, Indiana
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The 10 Commandments

#4: Honor your father and mother

The family is the God-given original cell of society. In order for the family to be what God created it to be, He establishes it with a certain order giving parents authority over their children. Thus, children owe their parents gratitude, true docility, and obedience.

Also covered under this commandment is the duty to be respectful and obedient to proper authorities (teachers, bosses, civil officials who have responsibility over us, police)

Grave violations of this commandment would include:

Failing to make sure that a parent is taken care of when they are old or sick

Disobedience by children that causes grave harm to the family

Parents who grossly neglect their duty as a parent

#5: You shall not kill

All human life is sacred.

Grave violations of this commandment include:

murder, euthanasia, suicide, drunkenness, illicit drug use, abortion
promoting, counseling or paying for an abortion
speeding recklessly, hatred of another,
willfully leading another into serious sin through word, attitude, or action
self-mutilation (which would include excessive tattooing and excessive or
harmful body piercing)
slander or detraction of another which brings them grave harm
cooperating with or being involved in embryonic stem cell research or *in vitro*
fertilization

Exceptions to this commandment: self-defense, defense of another, capital punishment (under the proper circumstances), police officers who must use deadly force in the line of duty, war (under the proper circumstances).

A word on Suicide:

Suicide is the murder of the self. However, the responsibility of and gravity of suicide can be diminished in the cases of grave psychological disturbances, anguish, grave fear of hardship, suffering, or torture. But this does not make it morally permissible, and it is the judgment of God that will measure the gravity or responsibility of the sin. However, the Church teaches that we should not despair the salvation of those who have committed suicide.

Mortal and Venial sins

Mortal sins are sins that break our relationship with God. If one dies having committed a mortal sin and is unrepentant of that sin, one goes to Hell, forever separated from God.

There are three conditions that must be met for one to have committed a mortal sin:

- 1) The sin must be **grave matter**. God through the Church reveals to us which sins are grave matter. If one has questions about whether a sin is grave, one should consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church and a good priest-confessor.
- 2) One must have **full knowledge** that what their doing is a grave sin.
- 3) One must have acted **deliberately (or freely)**.

In other words, mortal sins cannot be committed “accidentally”. A person who commits a mortal sin is one who knows that their action is a grave sin and freely chooses to do it anyway.

Venial sins are sins that hurt, but do not break, our relationship with God. Venial sins weaken a person’s will to avoid evil and may lead one to commit mortal sin. They are violations of God’s love and one should strive to avoid them.

REMEMBER

God is merciful and all sins can be forgiven if we turn to Him in repentance. He loves us and wants us to be free from our sins.

Use the great Sacrament of Reconciliation to allow God to free you from your sins.