



Well, we come to the final installment of our teaching on the Ten Commandments. We're left with the 7th, 8th, and the 10th commandments, all of which are probably the easiest to understand.

The 7th commandment is "You shall not steal". From the beginning God entrusted us humans with the earth and its resources, to take care of them, to master them by labor, and to enjoy their fruits. So, on the one hand, all the earth belongs to all of us.

But on the other hand, the earth is divided up among us so that we can live in security and fulfill the plan of God for us for our lives. In fact, we have a right to own our own portion of the goods of the earth as you know so that we can provide for ourselves, for those entrusted to us, and for others who need our help.

Stealing from others violates this right.

The gravity of the sin of stealing is determined by the harm that is done. So if a person steals a pack of gum from the store, that would be a venial sin because the harm done is small. If a person steals someone's welfare check, that's a grave sin, a mortal sin, because the harm that is done to the person is grave. What they need to live has been taken.

Here's an interesting question. What if you steal a half a million dollars from Donald Trump? That probably wouldn't do him grave harm because he has plenty. He's not going to go without his next meal. Well, it would still be a grave sin because it would gravely hurt you to steal that kind of money.

Some other areas of sin that fall under this commandment would include stealing time from an employer by not working as well as is expected. Downloading or copying music or videos without paying for them would be sinful.

The 10th commandment is tied into the 7th: "You shall not covet your neighbor's goods". This has to do with our desires. If we desire to steal something, that desire is itself a sin. But it goes deeper than that. Greed comes under this – the the desire to acquire material possessions without limit – and also envy, which is a grave sin if it wishes grave harm to a neighbor.

Finally, we have the 8th commandment: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”. All the sins of lying fall under this commandment. God is truth. He is the source of all truth. We were made for truth. We were made to love the truth.

But we have the capacity to betray that truth for selfish reasons. The gravity of the sin of lying is measured by the seriousness of the lie and the harm it causes. A lie, which causes grave harm, is mortal sin. A small lie is venial.

My friends, after having gone through the 10 Commandments, I remind you once again the purpose of doing this, that we might know our sins so that we might repent of them and be freed by the Lord. I hope this has served as a Lent-long examination of conscience.

In the Gospel today we heard the beautiful story of the woman caught in adultery. With repentance in her heart she meets the Lord. Notice she is on the verge of death! Her sins have brought her to this point even though her accusers have no right to do what they are doing. Jesus snatches her from the jaws of actual death, from the stone-throwers, but also from the death of sin. “I do not condemn you.” “Your sins are forgiven.” “Go and sin no more.”

Jesus wishes to do the same for us, to snatch us from the jaws of death, the death of soul that we bring on by our own sins. In repentance we come to Him and He says to us, “I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

**Fr. Mark Gurtner at St. Anthony de Padua Church, South Bend, Indiana
5th Sunday of Lent 2010**