
CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH - COMMANDMENTS NINE AND TEN

ARTICLE 9

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.²⁹⁹

Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.³⁰⁰

2514 St. John distinguishes three kinds of covetousness or concupiscence: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life.³⁰¹ In the Catholic catechetical tradition, the ninth commandment forbids carnal concupiscence; the tenth forbids coveting another's goods. (377, 400)

2515 Etymologically, "concupiscence" can refer to any intense form of human desire. Christian theology has given it a particular meaning: the movement of the sensitive appetite contrary to the operation of the human reason. The apostle St. Paul identifies it with the rebellion of the "flesh" against the "spirit."³⁰² Concupiscence stems from the disobedience of the first sin. It unsettles man's moral faculties and, without being in itself an offense, inclines man to commit sins.³⁰³ (405)

2516 Because man is a *composite being, spirit and body*, there already exists a certain tension in him; a certain struggle of tendencies between "spirit" and "flesh" develops. But in fact this

²⁹⁹ *Ex* 20:17.

³⁰⁰ *Mt* 5:28.

³⁰¹ Cf. *1 Jn* 2:16.

³⁰² Cf. *Gal* 5:16, 17, 24; *Eph* 2:3.

³⁰³ Cf. *Gen* 3:11; Council of Trent: DS 1515.

struggle belongs to the heritage of sin. It is a consequence of sin and at the same time a confirmation of it. It is part of the daily experience of the spiritual battle: (362; 407)

For the Apostle it is not a matter of despising and condemning the body which with the spiritual soul constitutes man's nature and personal subjectivity. Rather, he is concerned with the morally *good* or *bad* works, or better, the permanent dispositions—virtues and vices—which are the fruit of *submission* (in the first case) or of *resistance* (in the second case) to *the saving action of the Holy Spirit*. For this reason the Apostle writes: “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”³⁰⁴

I. PURIFICATION OF THE HEART

2517 The heart is the seat of moral personality: “Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication....”³⁰⁵ The struggle against carnal covetousness entails purifying the heart and practicing temperance: (368; 1809)

Remain simple and innocent, and you will be like little children who do not know the evil that destroys man's life.³⁰⁶

2518 The sixth beatitude proclaims, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”³⁰⁷ “Pure in heart” refers to those who have attuned their intellects and wills to the demands of God's holiness, chiefly in three areas: charity;³⁰⁸ chastity or sexual rectitude;³⁰⁹ love of truth and orthodoxy of faith.³¹⁰ There is a connection between purity of heart, of body, and of faith: (94; 158)¹

³⁰⁴ John Paul II, *DeV* 55; cf. *Gal* 5:25.

³⁰⁵ *Mt* 15:19.

³⁰⁶ *Pastor Hermae*, Mandate 2, 1: PG 2, 916.

³⁰⁷ *Mt* 5:8.

³⁰⁸ Cf. *1 Tim* 4:3–9; *2 Tim* 2:22.

³⁰⁹ Cf. *1 Thess* 4:7; *Col* 3:5; *Eph* 4:19.

³¹⁰ Cf. *Titus* 1:15; *1 Tim* 1:3–4; *2 Tim* 2:23–26.

¹ Catholic Church, [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#), 2nd Ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 601–603.

The faithful must believe the articles of the Creed “so that by believing they may obey God, by obeying may live well, by living well may purify their hearts, and with pure hearts may understand what they believe.”³¹¹

2519 The “pure in heart” are promised that they will see God face to face and be like him.³¹² Purity of heart is the precondition of the vision of God. Even now it enables us to see *according to* God, to accept others as “neighbors”; it lets us perceive the human body—ours and our neighbor’s—as a temple of the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of divine beauty. (2548; 2819; 2501)

II. THE BATTLE FOR PURITY

2520 Baptism confers on its recipient the grace of purification from all sins. But the baptized must continue to struggle against concupiscence of the flesh and disordered desires. With God’s grace he will prevail (1264)

— by the *virtue* and *gift of chastity*, for chastity lets us love with upright and undivided heart; (2337)

— by *purity of intention* which consists in seeking the true end of man: with simplicity of vision, the baptized person seeks to find and to fulfill God’s will in everything;³¹³ (1752)

— by *purity of vision*, external and internal; by discipline of feelings and imagination; by refusing all complicity in impure thoughts that incline us to turn aside from the path of God’s commandments: “Appearance arouses yearning in fools”;³¹⁴ (1762)

— by *prayer*: (2846)

I thought that continence arose from one’s own powers, which I did not recognize in myself. I was foolish enough not to know ... that no one can be continent unless you grant it. For you would surely have granted it if my inner groaning had reached your ears and I with firm faith had cast my cares on you.³¹⁵

2521 Purity requires *modesty*, an integral part of temperance. Modesty protects the intimate center of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden. It is ordered to

³¹¹ St. Augustine, *De fide et symbolo* 10, 25: PL 40, 196.

³¹² Cf. *1 Cor* 13:12; *1 Jn* 3:2.

³¹³ Cf. *Rom* 12:2; *Col* 1:10.

³¹⁴ *Wis* 15:5.

³¹⁵ St. Augustine, *Conf.* 6, 11, 20: PL 32, 729–730.

chastity to whose sensitivity it bears witness. It guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of persons and their solidarity.

2522 Modesty protects the mystery of persons and their love. It encourages patience and moderation in loving relationships; it requires that the conditions for the definitive giving and commitment of man and woman to one another be fulfilled. Modesty is decency. It inspires one's choice of clothing. It keeps silence or reserve where there is evident risk of unhealthy curiosity. It is discreet. (2492)

2523 There is a modesty of the feelings as well as of the body. It protests, for example, against the voyeuristic explorations of the human body in certain advertisements, or against the solicitations of certain media that go too far in the exhibition of intimate things. Modesty inspires a way of life which makes it possible to resist the allurements of fashion and the pressures of prevailing ideologies. (2354)

2524 The forms taken by modesty vary from one culture to another. Everywhere, however, modesty exists as an intuition of the spiritual dignity proper to man. It is born with the awakening consciousness of being a subject. Teaching modesty to children and adolescents means awakening in them respect for the human person.

2525 Christian purity requires a *purification of the social climate*. It requires of the communications media that their presentations show concern for respect and restraint. Purity of heart brings freedom from widespread eroticism and avoids entertainment inclined to voyeurism and illusion. (2344)

2526 So-called *moral permissiveness* rests on an erroneous conception of human freedom; the necessary precondition for the development of true freedom is to let oneself be educated in the moral law. Those in charge of education can reasonably be expected to give young people instruction respectful of the truth, the qualities of the heart, and the moral and spiritual dignity of man. (1740)

2527 "The Good News of Christ continually renews the life and culture of fallen man; it combats and removes the error and evil which flow from the ever-present attraction of sin. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples. It takes the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation, and with supernatural riches it causes them to blossom, as it were, from within; it fortifies, completes, and restores them in Christ."³¹⁶ (1204)²

³¹⁶ GS 58 § 4.

² Catholic Church, [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#), 2nd Ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 605.

ARTICLE 10

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet ... anything that is your neighbor's.... You shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.³¹⁷

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.³¹⁸

2534 The tenth commandment unfolds and completes the ninth, which is concerned with concupiscence of the flesh. It forbids coveting the goods of another, as the root of theft, robbery, and fraud, which the seventh commandment forbids. “Lust of the eyes” leads to the violence and injustice forbidden by the fifth commandment.³¹⁹ Avarice, like fornication, originates in the idolatry prohibited by the first three prescriptions of the Law.³²⁰ The tenth commandment concerns the intentions of the heart; with the ninth, it summarizes all the precepts of the Law. (2112; 2069)³

I. THE DISORDER OF COVETOUS DESIRES

2535 The sensitive appetite leads us to desire pleasant things we do not have, e.g., the desire to eat when we are hungry or to warm ourselves when we are cold. These desires are good in themselves; but often they exceed the limits of reason and drive us to covet unjustly what is not ours and belongs to another or is owed to him. (1767)

2536 The tenth commandment forbids *greed* and the desire to amass earthly goods without limit. It forbids *avarice* arising from a passion for riches and their attendant power. It also forbids the desire to commit injustice by harming our neighbor in his temporal goods: (2445)

³¹⁷ *Ex* 20:17; *Deut* 5:21.

³¹⁸ *Mt* 6:21.

³¹⁹ Cf. *1 Jn* 2:16; *Mic* 2:2.

³²⁰ Cf. *Wis* 14:12.

³ Catholic Church, [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#), 2nd Ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 606.

When the Law says, “You shall not covet,” these words mean that we should banish our desires for whatever does not belong to us. Our thirst for another’s goods is immense, infinite, never quenched. Thus it is written: “He who loves money never has money enough.”³²¹

2537 It is not a violation of this commandment to desire to obtain things that belong to one’s neighbor, provided this is done by just means. Traditional catechesis realistically mentions “those who have a harder struggle against their criminal desires” and so who “must be urged the more to keep this commandment”:

... merchants who desire scarcity and rising prices, who cannot bear not to be the only ones buying and selling so that they themselves can sell more dearly and buy more cheaply; those who hope that their peers will be impoverished, in order to realize a profit either by selling to them or buying from them ... physicians who wish disease to spread; lawyers who are eager for many important cases and trials.³²²

2538 The tenth commandment requires that *envy* be banished from the human heart. When the prophet Nathan wanted to spur King David to repentance, he told him the story about the poor man who had only one ewe lamb that he treated like his own daughter and the rich man who, despite the great number of his flocks, envied the poor man and ended by stealing his lamb.³²³ Envy can lead to the worst crimes.³²⁴ “Through the devil’s envy death entered the world”:³²⁵ (2317; 391)

We fight one another, and envy arms us against one another.... If everyone strives to unsettle the Body of Christ, where shall we end up? We are engaged in making Christ’s Body a corpse.... We declare ourselves members of one and the same organism, yet we devour one another like beasts.³²⁶

2539 Envy is a capital sin. It refers to the sadness at the sight of another’s goods and the immoderate desire to acquire them for oneself, even unjustly. When it wishes grave harm to a neighbor it is a mortal sin: (1866)

³²¹ *Roman Catechism*, III, 37; cf. *Sir* 5:8.

³²² *Roman Catechism*, III, 37.

³²³ Cf. *2 Sam* 12:1–4.

³²⁴ Cf. *Gen* 4:3–7; *1 Kings* 21:1–29.

³²⁵ *Wis* 2:24.

³²⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 27, 3–4: PG 61, 588.

St. Augustine saw envy as “*the diabolical sin.*”³²⁷ “From envy are born hatred, detraction, calumny, joy caused by the misfortune of a neighbor, and displeasure caused by his prosperity.”³²⁸

2540 Envy represents a form of sadness and therefore a refusal of charity; the baptized person should struggle against it by exercising good will. Envy often comes from pride; the baptized person should train himself to live in humility: (1829)

Would you like to see God glorified by you? Then rejoice in your brother’s progress and you will immediately give glory to God. Because his servant could conquer envy by rejoicing in the merits of others, God will be praised.³²⁹

II. THE DESIRES OF THE SPIRIT

2541 The economy of law and grace turns men’s hearts away from avarice and envy. It initiates them into desire for the Sovereign Good; it instructs them in the desires of the Holy Spirit who satisfies man’s heart. (1718; 2764; 397)

The God of the promises always warned man against seduction by what from the beginning has seemed “good for food ... a delight to the eyes ... to be desired to make one wise.”³³⁰

2542 The Law entrusted to Israel never sufficed to justify those subject to it; it even became the instrument of “lust.”³³¹ The gap between wanting and doing points to the conflict between God’s Law which is the “law of my mind,” and another law “making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members.”³³² (1963)

2543 “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.”³³³ Henceforth, Christ’s faithful “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”; they are led by the Spirit and follow the desires of the Spirit.³³⁴ (1992)

³²⁷ Cf. St. Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus* 4, 8: PL 40, 315–316.

³²⁸ St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 31, 45: PL 76, 621.

³²⁹ St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 7, 5: PG 60, 448.

³³⁰ *Gen* 3:6.

³³¹ Cf. *Rom* 7:7.

³³² *Rom* 7:23; cf. 7:10.

³³³ *Rom* 3:21–22.

³³⁴ *Gal* 5:24; cf. *Rom* 8:14, 27.

III. POVERTY OF HEART (2443–2449)

2544 Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them “renounce all that [they have]” for his sake and that of the Gospel.³³⁵ Shortly before his passion he gave them the example of the poor widow of Jerusalem who, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on.³³⁶ The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. (544)

2545 All Christ’s faithful are to “direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect charity by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches which is contrary to the spirit of evangelical poverty.”³³⁷ (2013)

2546 “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”³³⁸ The Beatitudes reveal an order of happiness and grace, of beauty and peace. Jesus celebrates the joy of the poor, to whom the Kingdom already belongs:³³⁹ (1716)

The Word speaks of voluntary humility as “poverty in spirit”; the Apostle gives an example of God’s poverty when he says: “For your sakes he became poor.”³⁴⁰

2547 The Lord grieves over the rich, because they find their consolation in the abundance of goods.³⁴¹ “Let the proud seek and love earthly kingdoms, but blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.”³⁴² Abandonment to the providence of the Father in heaven frees us from anxiety about tomorrow.³⁴³ Trust in God is a preparation for the blessedness of the poor. They shall see God. (305)

IV. “I WANT TO SEE GOD”

2548 Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. “The promise [of

³³⁵ *Lk* 14:33; cf. *Mk* 8:35.

³³⁶ Cf. *Lk* 21:4.

³³⁷ *LG* 42 § 3.

³³⁸ *Mt* 5:3.

³³⁹ Cf. *Lk* 6:20.

³⁴⁰ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus* 1: PG 44, 1200D; cf. *2 Cor* 8:9.

³⁴¹ *Lk* 6:24.

³⁴² St. Augustine, *De serm. Dom. in monte* 1, 1, 3: PL 34, 1232.

³⁴³ Cf. *Mt* 6:25–34.

seeing God] surpasses all beatitude.... In Scripture, to see is to possess.... Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive.”³⁴⁴ (2519)

2549 It remains for the holy people to struggle, with grace from on high, to obtain the good things God promises. In order to possess and contemplate God, Christ’s faithful mortify their cravings and, with the grace of God, prevail over the seductions of pleasure and power. (2015)

2550 On this way of perfection, the Spirit and the Bride call whoever hears them³⁴⁵ to perfect communion with God: (314)

There will true glory be, where no one will be praised by mistake or flattery; true honor will not be refused to the worthy, nor granted to the unworthy; likewise, no one unworthy will pretend to be worthy, where only those who are worthy will be admitted. There true peace will reign, where no one will experience opposition either from self or others. God himself will be virtue’s reward; he gives virtue and has promised to give himself as the best and greatest reward that could exist.... “I shall be their God and they will be my people....” This is also the meaning of the Apostle’s words: “So that God may be all in all.” God himself will be the goal of our desires; we shall contemplate him without end, love him without surfeit, praise him without weariness. This gift, this state, this act, like eternal life itself, will assuredly be common to all.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus* 6: PG 44, 1265A.

³⁴⁵ Cf. *Rev* 22:17.

³⁴⁶ St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, 22, 30: PL 41, 801–802; cf. *Lev* 26:12; cf. *1 Cor* 15:28.

⁴ Catholic Church, [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#), 2nd Ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 609–610.