

## The Seventh, Eighth and Tenth Commandments

### **Introduction**

As we reflect on the last three commandments let us keep in mind, once again, how terrible is the effect of sin, the violation of any of the commandments of God. It is far, far more disastrous than we can think of with our limited human intelligence. Jesus' words to the man who was sick for 38 years, lying near the Bethesda Pool gives us some idea of the horrible effect of sin: *"Look, you are well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse may happen to you"* (Jn. 5:14). Needless to say, the inner meaning of this statement is that the effect of sin is more horrible than 38 years of serious illness, which kept that man bedridden all the time! It may also mean our personal sin (means breaking of the commandments) makes us "powerless" to do what we could have done other wise. It makes us spiritually "paralyzed"! It may also mean that our sin can destroy even our health, the primary condition of a peaceful earthly life! It is this terrible effect of sin that is illustrated in the following words of the book of Sirach: *"Every lawless act leaves an incurable wound, like one left by a double edged sword"* (Sirach. 21:3 Good News Bible).

Therefore, it is highly important to pay keen attention to the meaning and ramifications of each commandment we are deliberating on, though some of them may seem insignificant in the light of the "wisdom" of the world. Let us recall once again the words of Jesus: *"What is of human esteem is an abomination in the sight of God"* (Lk. 16:15).

If we take enough time to reflect on each commandment, instead of simply reading them thinking that we know their meaning, God will reveal their deeper implications and create in us a new consciousness of our sins related to these commandments. It will consequently lead us to a deeper repentance and profound healing. The scripture guarantees this: *"Thus says Yahweh: I will look with pity on the man who has a humble and contrite heart, who trembles at my word"* (Isaiah 66:2); *"If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing"* (I Jn. 1:9).

### THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

It is to be remembered here again that though this commandment is given in a negative form: "do not steal", mere avoidance of stealing is not what is meant by it. It enjoins us to do numerous positive things also. They are a vital part of it. This is the common principle to be followed to bring out all the implications of the Commandments. Having just a limited number of negative commandments makes us free to do an infinite number of positive things within these "foul lines". For example, 'no idolatry' means "worship of God" 'do not kill' means "foster life". Therefore, we need to see both the negative and the positive aspects of this commandment.

It is the understanding of the positive aspects of the commandment that helps us to practice the virtues proper to the particular commandment. Otherwise, we will remain mere "sin-avoiders" instead of virtue-holders. Since at the end of our life God is going to ask us to submit a list of our virtuous deeds rather than of the mere avoidance of sinful acts, it is highly important to understand what is in the mind of God behind each commandment, and what positive virtues God intended us to practice by these commandments in negative exterior.

It is only the Church's Magisterium that can teach us the mind of God behind each commandment. This is explicit in Jesus' final command: *"The eleven disciples went to Galilee,*

*to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age"* (Mt. 28:16, 17-20).

Therefore, instead of being satisfied with our present knowledge, we have a serious obligation to know all the ramifications of these commandments in order that we may observe them in all their implications. Hence we base our search for the implications of the seventh commandment on the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The important points are:

- The seventh commandment forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of one's neighbor and wronging him in any way with respect to his goods.
- It commands justice and charity in the care of earthly goods and the fruits of men's labor.
- For the sake of the common good, it requires respect for the universal destination of goods and respect for the right to private property.
- Christian life strives to order this world's goods to God and to fraternal charity(ccc 2401).

Therefore, the seventh commandment mandates that we exercise the virtue of temperance in relation to material possessions, so that we do not become unduly attached to them. The Scripture speaks of three main highways of sin in I Jn 2:16, and one of them is disordered desires of the eyes, i.e. the ambition to acquire everything that appeals to us. It also requires the virtue of justice, which recognizes our neighbor's property rights. Finally, it encourages us to practice solidarity by which we share our possessions with others, especially the most needy. St. Paul underlines this aspect when he says: *If anyone is stealing he must stop and begin using those hands of his for honest work so he can give to others in need*" (Eph. 4:28).

In the *Catechism* the Seventh Commandment is treated under six titles: (1) The Universal destination and the private ownership of goods, (2) Respect for persons and their goods, (3)The Social Doctrine of the Church, (4) Economic Activity and Social Justice, (5)Justice and Solidarity among nations, and (6) Love for the Poor.

## I. THE UNIVERSAL DESTINATION AND THE PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF GOODS

### **Goods of creation meant for the entire creation.**

In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labor, and enjoy their fruits. The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race.

However, the earth is divided up among men to assure the security of their lives, endangered by poverty and threatened by violence. The appropriation of property is legitimate for guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of persons and for helping each of them to meet his basic needs and the needs of those in his charge. It should allow for a natural solidarity to develop among men(CCC 2402).

### **The right to private property does not abolish the universal destination of goods**

The *right to private property*, acquired or received in a just way, does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of mankind. The *universal destination of goods* remains primordial, even if the promotion of the common good requires respect for the right to private property and its exercise(CCC 2403).

### **Even legitimately owned goods are not exclusive to oneself**

“In his use of things man should regard the external goods he legitimately owns not merely as exclusive to himself but common to others also, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as himself” (Gaudium Et Spes 69). The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefits to others, first of all his family” (2404).

### **Better parts of the consumption goods are to be reserved for the sick and the poor.**

“Goods of production - material or immaterial - such as land, factories, practical or artistic skills, oblige their possessors to employ them in ways that will benefit the greatest number. Those who hold goods for use and consumption should use them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, for the sick and the poor” (ccc. 2405)

## II RESPECT FOR PERSONS AND THEIR GOODS

“In economic matters, respect for human dignity requires:

- (1) The practice of the virtue of *temperance*, so as to moderate attachment to this world's goods;
- (2) The practice of the virtue of *justice*, to preserve our neighbor's rights and render him what is his due;
- (3) And the practice of *solidarity*, in accordance with the golden rule and in keeping with the generosity of the Lord, who "though he was rich, yet for your sake . . . became poor so that by his poverty, you might become rich” (CCC 2407).

### **Respect for the goods of others**

“The seventh commandment forbids *theft*, that is, usurping another's property against the reasonable will of the owner. There is no theft if consent can be presumed or if refusal is contrary to reason and the universal destination of goods. This is the case in obvious and urgent necessity when the only way to provide for immediate, essential needs (food, shelter, clothing . . .) is to put at one's disposal and use the property of others” (ccc 2408).

“Even if it does not contradict the provisions of civil law, any form of unjustly taking and keeping the property of others is against the seventh commandment: thus, deliberate retention of goods lent or of objects lost; business fraud; paying unjust wages; forcing up prices by taking advantage of the ignorance or hardship of another” (cfr. Deut. 25; 13-16).

“The following are also morally illicit: speculation in which one contrives to manipulate the price of goods artificially in order to gain an advantage to the detriment of others; corruption in which one influences the judgment of those who must make decisions according to law; appropriation and use for private purposes of the common goods of an enterprise; work poorly done; tax evasion; forgery of cheques and invoices; excessive expenses and waste. Willfully damaging private or public property is contrary to the moral law and requires reparation” (2409).

“*Promises* must be kept and *contracts* strictly observed to the extent that the commitments made in them are morally just. A significant part of economic and social life depends on the honoring of contracts between physical or moral persons - commercial contracts of purchase or sale, rental or labor contracts. All contracts must be agreed to and executed in good faith” (2410).

“Contracts are subject to *commutative justice* which regulates exchanges between persons and between institutions in accordance with a strict respect for their rights. Commutative justice obliges strictly; it requires safeguarding property rights, paying debts, and fulfilling obligations freely contracted. Without commutative justice, no other form of justice is possible” (2411).

### **Need of Restitution**

We are bound to restore ill-gotten goods if we are able, or else our sin will not be forgiven. When the theft is a mortal sin, neglect of restitution is also a mortal sin. The obligation is binding until it is fulfilled, and the greater the willful delay, the greater is the sin.

“In virtue of commutative justice, *reparation for injustice* committed requires the restitution of stolen goods to their owner:

Jesus blesses Zacchaeus for his pledge: "If I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."

- Those who, directly or indirectly, have taken possession of the goods of another, are obliged to make restitution of them, or to return the equivalent in kind or in money, if the goods have disappeared, as well as the profit or advantages their owner would have legitimately obtained from them.

- Likewise, all who in some manner have taken part in a theft or who have knowingly benefited from it - for example, those who ordered it, assisted in it, or received the stolen goods - are obliged to make restitution in proportion to their responsibility and to their share of what was stolen” (2412).

- Restitution must be made to the owner, if possible, or to his heirs, if he is dead. If neither is possible, it should be given in alms in the name of the owner.

- Not only must the stolen property be returned, but also the loss resulting from the thieves’ actual injustice must be made good. The Biblical law requires a thief to pay at best twice the value of what he stole, and occasionally even five times: “*When a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for the one ox, and four sheep for the one sheep.*” (Exodus 21:37)

Even in accidental loss, one is responsible for protecting their neighbor’s goods: “ “ *When a man is burning over a field or a vineyard, if he lets the fire spread so that it burns in another's field, he must make restitution with the best produce of his own field or vineyard. When a man gives money or an article to another for safekeeping and it is stolen from the latter's house, the thief, if caught, must make twofold restitution. If the thief is not caught, the owner of the house shall be brought to God, to swear that he himself did not lay hands on his neighbor's property.*” (Exodus 22:4,6)

### **Respect for the integrity of creation**

“The dominion granted by the Creator over the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be separated from respect for moral obligations, including those toward generations to come” (2456).

“Animals are entrusted to man's stewardship; he must show them kindness. They may be used to serve the just satisfaction of man's needs” (2457).

“It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly.

It is likewise unworthy to spend money on them that should as a priority go to the relief of human misery. One can love animals; one should not direct to them the affection due only to persons” (2418).

## **III THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH**

“The Church makes a judgment about economic and social matters when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls requires it. She is concerned with the temporal common good of men because they are ordered to the sovereign Good, their ultimate end” (2458). “She strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods and in socio-economic relationships” (2420).

“The Church's social teaching proposes principles for reflection; it provides criteria for judgment; it gives guidelines for action:

Any system in which social relationships are determined entirely by economic factors is contrary to the nature of the human person and his acts” (2423).

“A theory that makes profit the exclusive norm and ultimate end of economic activity is morally unacceptable. The disordered desire for money cannot but produce perverse effects. It is one of the causes of the many conflicts which disturb the social order” A system that "subordinates the basic rights of individuals and of groups to the collective organization of production" is contrary to human dignity. Every practice that reduces persons to nothing more than a means of profit enslaves man, leads to idolizing money, and contributes to the spread of atheism. "You cannot serve God and mammon” (2424).

#### IV . ECONOMIC AVTIVITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The development of economic activity and growth in production are meant to provide for the needs of human beings. Economic life is not meant solely to multiply goods produced and increase profit or power; it is ordered first of all to the service of persons, of the whole man, and of the entire human community. Economic activity, conducted according to its own proper methods, is to be exercised within the limits of the moral order, in keeping with social justice so as to correspond to God's plan for Man” (2426).

“Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another. Hence work is a duty: "If any one will not work, let him not eat." Work honors the Creator's gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work. He shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish. Work can be a means of sanctification and a way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ” (2427).

“In work, the person exercises and fulfills in part the potential inscribed in his nature. The primordial value of labor stems from man himself, its author and its beneficiary. Work is for man, not man for work.

Everyone should be able to draw from work the means of providing for his life and that of his family, and of serving the human community” (2428).

Those *responsible for business enterprises* are responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations. They have an obligation to consider the good of persons and not only the increase of *profits*. Profits are necessary, however. They make possible the investments that ensure the future of a business and they guarantee employment.

“*Access to employment* and to professions must be open to all without unjust discrimination: men and women, healthy and disabled, natives and immigrants. For its part society should, according to circumstances, help citizens find work and employment” (2433).

‘A *just wage* is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice. In determining fair pay both the needs and the contributions of each person must be taken into account. "Remuneration for work should guarantee man the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for himself and his family on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level, taking into account the role and the productivity of each, the state of the business, and the common good." Agreement between the parties is not sufficient to justify morally the amount to be received in wages’ (2434).

## V . JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY AMONG NATIONS

“On the international level, inequality of resources and economic capability is such that it creates a real "gap" between nations. On the one side there are those nations possessing and developing the means of growth and, on the other, those accumulating debts” (2437).

*Rich nations* have a grave moral responsibility toward those which are unable to ensure the means of their development by themselves or have been prevented from doing so by tragic historical events. It is a duty in solidarity and charity; it is also an obligation in justice if the prosperity of the rich nations has come from resources that have not been paid for fairly” (2439).

“*Direct aid* is an appropriate response to immediate, extraordinary needs caused by natural catastrophes, epidemics, and the like. But it does not suffice to repair the grave damage resulting from destitution or to provide a lasting solution to a country's needs. It is also necessary to *reform* international economic and financial *institutions* so that they will better promote equitable relationships with less advanced countries.

The efforts of poor countries working for growth and liberation must be supported.

This doctrine must be applied especially in the area of agricultural labor. Peasants, especially in the Third World, form the overwhelming majority of the poor” (2440)

## VI . LOVE OF THE POOR

### **Love for the Poor. (“Preferential Option for the Poor”)**

Finally, the seventh commandment deals with many issues in the area of social justice, the economy and the treatment of the poor:

-Catechism of the Catholic Church notes this thus :

“God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay." It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones. When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence” (CCC 2443)

“"The Church's love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to "be able to give to those in need.

"It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty" (2444).

"Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use:

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you" (2445;quoted from James. 5:1-6).

"St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs." "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity": When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice" (CCC 2446)

"In its various forms - material deprivation, unjust oppression, physical and psychological illness and death - *human misery* is the obvious sign of the inherited condition of frailty and need for salvation in which man finds himself as a consequence of the original sin. This misery elicited the compassion of Christ the Savior, who willingly took it upon himself and identified himself with the least of his brethren. Hence, those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of *a preferential love* on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere." (2448).

"Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God" (2462).

"How can we not recognize Lazarus, the hungry beggar in the parable (cf. *Lk* 17:19-31), in the multitude of human beings without bread, a roof or a place to stay? How can we fail to hear Jesus: "As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (CCC 2462;*Mt* 25:45)?"

- Jesus had a special concern and love for the poor.
- We cannot call ourselves his disciples without seeking out and responding to the needs of the poverty-stricken in our midst. In fact the Lord will judge us on how we meet their needs. (*Mt* 25:31-46)

### **N. B Certain sins in the category of theft**

1. Theft or robbery (for example: stealing money from others, home which was kept for something important.)

"Neither thieves, nor the greedy..., nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:10)

2. Assisting in theft or robbery.

3. Borrowing without hope or intention of repaying.

*“Lend to your neighbor in his hour of need, and pay back your neighbor when a loan falls due; Keep your promise, be honest with him, and you will always come by what you need. (Sirach 29:2-3)”*

4. Rash speculation, without being able to bear possible loss.

5. Causing damage to another person’s property.

6. Vandalism (destruction of public property).

7. Cheating people of their money or property.

*“If you have the knowledge, answer your neighbor; if not, put your hand over your mouth.” (Sirach 5:14)*

8. Depriving workers of their just wages.

*“Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter.” (James 5:4-5)*

9. Work poorly done (shoddy work)

*“Slaves, obey your human masters in everything, not only when being watched, as currying favor, but in simplicity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not for others, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the due payment of the inheritance; be slaves of the Lord Christ.” Col 3:22-24.*

10. Fraud

*“A partridge that mothers a brood not her own is the man who acquires wealth unjustly: In midlife it will desert him; in the end he is only a fool” Jer 17:11*

11. Forcing prices up by taking unfair advantage of another. (price fixing unjustly).

12. Tax evasion

13. Forgery of cheques and invoices.

14. Padding expense accounts

15. Excessive expenses, wasteful practices

16. Accepting bribes.

17. Receiving stolen goods while knowing them to be stolen.

18. Passing bad money in payment.

19. Using false weights and measures.

20. Adulteration of goods and any other form of cheating in business.

21. Dishonest statements in insurance contracts.

22. Exorbitant interests.

23. Unlawful strikes.

24. Refusal to pay rent.

*“Lend to your neighbor in his hour of need, and pay back your neighbor when a loan falls due; Keep your promise, be honest with him, and you will always come by what you need. (Sirach 29:2-3)”*

25. Not paying debts.

26. Embezzlement.

27. Computer theft.

28. Mail scams.

29. Counterfeit money.

30. Not restoring what has been unjustly taken or what has been lent to us.

*“When a man is burning over a field or a vineyard, if he lets the fire spread so that it burns in another's field, he must make restitution with the best produce of his own field or vineyard. If the fire spreads further, and catches on to thorn bushes, so that shocked grain or standing grain or*

*the field itself is burned up, the one who started the fire must make full restitution. "When a man gives money or an article to another for safekeeping and it is stolen from the latter's house, the thief, if caught, must make twofold restitution. If the thief is not caught, the owner of the house shall be brought to God, to swear that he himself did not lay hands on his neighbor's property."* (Exodus 22:4-7)

31. Not taking reasonable pains to seek the owner of things found.
32. Cheating on exams.
33. Plagiarism.
34. Violation of copyright laws in reproduction of magazines, books, videos, audio cassettes, movies, computer software.
35. Not keeping promises and contracts.

### THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*

This commandment forbids all sins against truth. "This moral prescription flows from the vocation of the holy people to bear witness to their God who is the truth and wills the truth. Offenses against the truth expressed **by word or deed** a refusal to commit oneself to moral uprightness: they are fundamental infidelities to God" (CCC 2464)

#### Living in Truth

Again Jesus spoke of himself as the Truth. Yes, in Jesus the whole of God's truth has been manifested. Therefore, St. Paul tells us that "*speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ... Therefore putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.*" (Eph 4:15,25). "To follow Jesus is to live in 'the Spirit of truth', whom the Father sends in His name and who leads 'into all the truth'. To his disciples Jesus teaches the unconditional love of truth: Let what you say be simply 'Yes or No'" (CCC 2466 ; Mt 5:37).

We are called to lead a life of truthfulness. That is why we tend by nature towards the truth. Truthfulness is the virtue, which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words, and in guarding against duplicity, dissimulation and hypocrisy. Remember that Jesus was always in open fight against the Pharisees for their hypocrisy!

#### To bear witness to the truth

"Before Pilate, Christ proclaims that he "has come into the world, to bear witness to the truth." The Christian is not to "be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord." In situations that require witness to the faith, the Christian must profess it without equivocation, after the example of St. Paul before his judges." (CCC 2471)

*"I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God."* (Lk 12:8)

The Christian is not to "be ashamed of testifying to our Lord" (2 Tim 1:8) in deed and word. Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith." (CCC 2506)

#### Offenses against Truth or sins against the Eighth commandment

1. False testimony

It is giving evidence about something we know to be untrue.

“When it is made publicly, a statement contrary to the truth takes on a particular gravity. In court it becomes false witness. When it is under oath, it is perjury. Acts such as these contribute to condemnation of the innocent, exoneration of the guilty, or the increased punishment of the accused. They gravely compromise the exercise of justice and the fairness of judicial decisions.” (CCC 2476)

2. Rash judgment.

It is the assent of the will to be suspicious about others, without sufficient grounds. It is obviously opposed to charity and justice.

3. Detraction

It means making known the secret faults of another without just cause. It is commonly done by imparting uncharitable gossip.

*“Thou shalt not be a detractor nor a whisperer among people”* (Lev 19:16).

*“Hast thou heard a word against your neighbor? Let it die within thee”* (Ecclus 19:10)

*“Detract not one another... if thou judge the law, thou are not a doer of the law but a judge.”* (James 4:11)

The guilt of the detraction depends on the character and position of the person who speaks, on the quality and position of the person spoken of, on the nature of the fault revealed, on the number of persons to whom it is made known, and on the injury done or foreseen.

4. Calumny

It is speaking things contrary to the truth which harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them.

5. Adulation

Every word or attitude that encourages and confirms another in malicious acts and perverse conduct. Adulation is a grave fault if it makes one an accomplice in another's vice or grave sins.

6. Lies

“A lie consists in speaking a falsehood with the intention of deceiving.” The Lord denounces lying as the work of the devil: “You are of your father the devil, . . . there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (CCC 2482)

“Lying is the most direct offense against the truth. To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to lead someone into error. By injuring man's relation to truth and to his neighbor, a lie offends against the fundamental relation of man and of his word to the Lord.” (CCC 2483)

“The *gravity of a lie* is measured against the nature of the truth it deforms, the circumstances, the intentions of the one who lies, and the harm suffered by its victims. If a lie in

itself only constitutes a venial sin, it becomes mortal when it does grave injury to the virtues of justice and charity.” (CCC 2484)

“By its very nature, lying is to be condemned. It is a profanation of speech, whereas the purpose of speech is to communicate known truth to others. The deliberate intention of leading a neighbor into error by saying things contrary to the truth constitutes a failure in justice and charity. The culpability is greater when the intention of deceiving entails the risk of deadly consequences for those who are led astray” (2485).

“Since it violates the virtue of truthfulness, a lie does real violence to another. It affects his ability to know, which is a condition of every judgment and decision. It contains the seed of discord and all consequent evils. Lying is destructive of society; it undermines trust among men and tears apart the fabric of social relationships” (2486).

“Every offense committed against justice and truth entails the *duty of reparation*, even if its author has been forgiven. When it is impossible publicly to make reparation for a wrong, it must be made secretly. If someone who has suffered harm cannot be directly compensated, he must be given moral satisfaction in the name of charity. This duty of reparation also concerns offenses against another's reputation. This reparation, moral and sometimes material, must be evaluated in terms of the extent of the damage inflicted. It obliges in conscience” (2487).

#### 7. Tale bearing

is repeating to anyone what others have said about him. “ The talebearer shall defile his own soul (Ecclus 21:31).

#### 8. Backbiting

is speaking of a person's faults, even though they be known to all.

#### 9. Contumely

i.e. Insults, raillery and word of reproach offered a person in his presence. It may be grievous sin. (Mt 5:22).

#### 10. Betraying secrets

The guilt of this depends on the importance of the secret and the injury likely to follow the revelation. It could be grievously sinful to invade the privacy of another by reading his secret documents or letters or email without the consent of either the recipient or the sender or without legitimate authority to do so or without just cause. Because in so doing, a person is deprived of secrets which he has a perfect right to preserve.

### **Respect for the Truth**

“The *right to the communication* of the truth is not unconditional. Everyone must conform his life to the Gospel precept of fraternal love. This requires us in concrete situations to judge whether or not it is appropriate to reveal the truth to someone who asks for it” (2488).

“Charity and respect for the truth should dictate the response to every *request for information or communication*. The good and safety of others, respect for privacy, and the common good are sufficient reasons for being silent about what ought not be known or for making use of a discreet language. The duty to avoid scandal often commands strict discretion. No one is bound to reveal the truth to someone who does not have the right to know it. (2489).

“An offense committed against the truth requires reparation” (2509).

“The golden rule helps one discern, in concrete situations, whether or not it would be appropriate to reveal the truth to someone who asks for it(2510)

#### TENTH COMMANDMENT

*'You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. 'You shall not desire your neighbor's house or field, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or ass, nor anything that belongs to him.'*

The tenth commandment forbids greed, avarice and envy. In the seventh commandment, the focus is on outer behavior whereas in the Tenth commandment the concentration is on the inner thoughts, desires and attitude that people have about money and possessions.

It is to be noted that absence of action doesn't lessen the gravity of sin; inordinate desire in and of itself constitutes a sin. Otherwise there would have been no need of giving a separate commandment that deals with only desires and attitudes.

This will be more clear when we understand Jesus' teaching in Mt 15:19 *“For from the heart comes evil intentions: murder, adultery, fornication, theft, perjury, slander. These are the things that make a person unclean.”* Yahweh reminds us of the wickedness of our heart through prophet Isaiah: “The heart is the most deceitful thing there is and desperately wicked. No one can really know how bad it is! Only the Lord knows!” (Jeremiah 17:9).

The fact that along with our good deeds, the deepest motives behind those deeds also will be taken into consideration for our judgment again highlights the gravity of failures in desires and thoughts. “God searches all hearts and examines deepest motives so he can give to each person his right reward according to his deeds – how he has lived” (Jer 17:10). Even the good works done will be ignored due to lack of good intentions.

The scripture presents the covetousness, desire for the riches of this world as a grave sin! It is clear from the fact that it is included in the list of the three main highways of sin in 1Jn 2:15-17 *“Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love these things you show that you do not really love God; for all these worldly things, these evil desires, the craze for sex(lust of the flesh), the ambition to buy everything that appeals to you(lust of the eye) and the pride that comes from wealth and importance – these are not from God. They are from this evil world itself.”* Here the Holy Spirit through the words of St. John equates the ambition for money and possessions with lust of the flesh and pride which are the cardinal vices.

Both 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> commandments speak of the intentions and desires of the heart; they were actually the preparation for the teaching of Jesus that would focus on conversion of heart and possession of pure and righteous attitudes, rather than mere external conformity to law.

So, the tenth commandment forbids greed, avarice and envy. Greed is the desire to amass unlimited wealth. We may say that we don't have greed. But then, let us ask ourselves: “Do we fix any limitation up to which only we shall have wealth?” No! Real desire of our heart is to amass as much wealth as we can. That is the real sign of greed. Avarice is the passionate seeking of riches and the power that comes from it.

Jesus warned: “*Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions*” (Lk 12:15), and Luke proceeds to relate the Lord’s parable of the miserly man who tore down his storage barns to build bigger ones. Clearly Jesus condemns the greed and avarice of those bound by the passion to accumulate and hoard money and earthly goods for one's own benefit.

It may lead to the injustice of taking, or seeking to take the money and goods of others. Catechism says: “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: “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.” (CCC 2536).

### POVERTY OF HEART

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. 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. The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven” (2544).

“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” (2545).

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” 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:

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.” (2546).

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

It may also express itself in the capital sin of envy, that “cancer” of the heart that is saddened or troubled by the goods or the success of another person. “and the immoderate desire to acquire them for oneself, even unjustly. When it wishes grave harm to a neighbor it is a mortal sin: St. Augustine saw envy as “*the diabolical sin.*” “From envy are born hatred, detraction, calumny, joy caused by the misfortune of a neighbor, and displeasure caused by his prosperity.”” (CCC 2539).

“Envy is sadness at the sight of another's goods and the immoderate desire to have them for oneself. It is a capital sin” (2553).

### Real Solution

The ultimate solution for sins against the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> commandments is to replace the “desires of the flesh” with “the desires of the Holy Spirit who satisfies man's heart” (CCC 2541). Christ's faithful have “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal 5:24); they are led by the Spirit”, and “follow the desires of the Spirit” (Romans 8:14; see CCC 2543).

The opposite of coveting the goods of others is the desire to abandon the riches for the sake of God's kingdom, as Jesus "*emptied himself, taking the form of a servant*" (Philip 2:7).

Jesus taught in the beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of God is theirs" (Mt 5:3). Yes, the road to real happiness begins with a healthy detachment from material goods. In the same sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that building up material wealth for its own sake is foolishness. (Mt 6:19-21). The same sentiment is expressed in Jesus' statement just after the parable of the rich fool: "*You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong? Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God*" (Lk 12:20-21). And Jesus' request to the rich young man who desired to become perfect: "*If you wish to be perfect, go and also in his exhortation to sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; Then come, follow me*" (Mt 19:21) and Jesus' comments on his response: "*It is hard for someone rich to enter the kingdom of heaven*" (Mt 19:23) is a dire warning. Yes, there is nothing more wicked than love of money!

All these words of Jesus should make us vigilant and to seek effective means to battle against our inner covetousness for money and possessions. The only way out is to cultivate the virtue of charity. We should be willing to share our possessions with others and learn how to do it.

"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." (CCC 2535)

"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: 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(CCC 2536).

"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." (CCC 2537)

"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. Envy can lead to the worst crimes. "Through the devil's envy death entered the world": 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.” (CCC 2538).

“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: St. Augustine saw envy as "*the* diabolical sin." "From envy are born hatred, detraction, calumny, joy caused by the misfortune of a neighbor, and displeasure caused by his prosperity” (CCC 2539).

“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: 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” (CCC 2540).