

THIRD AND FOURTH COMMANDMENTS

Rest, Community Worship & Family Life

(C 2168-2257, USC Ch. 27-28)

In this lesson we will look at:

- Third commandment
- Sabbath rest
- Sabbath worship
- Duties of children
- Parental duties
- Fourth commandment and civic authorities

The third commandment (C 2168-2195)

“Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day” (Ex 20:8).

The *Catechism* states: “The third commandment of the Decalogue recalls the holiness of the Sabbath: ‘The seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord.’” (C 2168).

The two-fold purpose of the Sabbath Day is rest from work and worship of God, more specifically, *community* worship of God.

Sabbath rest

The *Catechism* begins its teaching on the third commandment by reflecting on the meaning of the Sabbath in the Old Testament. Ex 31:15 states: “The seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord.” Dt 5:12 stresses that the Sabbath is a day to renew our covenant with God. Hence, the Sabbath is linked to both creation and covenant, two major events in the history of salvation.

Gen 2:2 tells us that God “rested on the seventh day.” Of course, God never gets tired. But as the inspired storytellers of Genesis imagined the work of creation, they could not image it without a pause for rest.

Why rest? For the people of Israel who did slave labor in Egypt, the thought of a whole day of rest was a wonderful new blessing. It was and is also a reminder to us that life is not all about *doing*, but also about *being*.

Concerning the Sabbath, scripture scholar John Craghan writes: “Sabbath is derived from the Hebrew root meaning “to stop, cease,” namely from work. This is the institution of the Sabbath, not as a day of worship, but as a day of rest. It is a celebration of trust in God, who does not spend the final day in exhausting activities but in peace and quiet. The Sabbath is, therefore, an invitation to the Israelite to enter into the entire rhythm of creation.

Essentially, the *Sabbath rest is the sanctification of time*. It boldly asserts that there are limits to our feverish pursuit of goods, that there should be a pause at this special time to recognize God’s gift-giving. As Ex 31:17 puts it, on the Sabbath we should not only rest but also be refreshed. It is hardly an accident that the sacred author has God bless and hallow the seventh day.

The rest or being aspect of life is beautifully emphasized in the Mary and Martha story in Lk 10:38-42. Martha is busy *doing* many things and complains to Jesus about Mary’s failure to help her. Jesus responds: “Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her.” In this story Jesus is telling us that there is a *time to do* and also a *time to be*, a time to rest from doing and a time to sit to contemplate God. Resting gives us the opportunity to recreate ourselves and get ready for another week of work.

The *Catechism* notes: “God’s action is a model for human action. If God “rested and was refreshed” on the seventh day, man, too, ought to “rest” and should let others, especially the poor, “be refreshed.”

The *United States Catholic Catechism* (p.368) states: “Sunday rest puts our whole life into perspective. It helps us stand back from material concerns and reflect on spiritual values. Taking a breather from the pressures of the workplace, we are freed to open our souls to matters that have eternal significance. Sunday rest allows us to look again at the wonders of nature and experience the harmony and peace placed there by God. It is a precious time for rediscovering the fundamental goodness of creation as it comes from God’s providential hand. Sunday also provides the opportunity for families to be together and to engage in common activities. Weekday schedules often require members of the family to spend much time away from each other.”

Pause: How did you spend Sunday when you were growing up? How do you spend Sunday now? Has our society lost its sense of the Sabbath—a day to stop work, and to rest and worship God?

Sabbath worship

Sunday is the Christian Sabbath for on this day, Jesus rose from the dead. Sunday is sometimes called the “*Eighth Day*” – a day which transcends time and points to eternity. Sunday is also called the “Lord’s Day.” This title had special meaning for the early Christians because it called to mind Jesus’ victory over death. If, for the Jews, the Sabbath calls to mind God’s creation of the world, for Christians, Sunday calls to mind our new creation in Christ.

For Christians, the central and most important way to keep holy the Lord’s Day is through participating in the Eucharist. We know from the *Acts of the Apostles* and the writings of the Early Church Fathers that from the beginning of Christianity, Christians gathered together on Sundays to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, to do what he had done the night before he died.

Because the Eucharist is the foundation and heart of the Christian life, Church law requires Catholics to participate in Sunday Mass or its vigil. One can, of course, be excused for not attending Mass for some good reason, e.g., sickness, travel or mandatory work on a Sunday.

Pause: What one thing could you do to help a non-churchgoing Catholic to return to the Eucharist?

The fourth commandment (C 2196-2257, USC Ch. 28)
“*Honor your father and your mother.*”

The first three commandments help us to understand how we are to love and honor God with our whole being. The remaining seven commandments tell us how we are to love and relate to others. The fourth commandment addresses family relationships, especially the respect and honor that children should have for their parents. The fourth commandment also addresses the duties of governments and citizens.

Today, families come in many shapes and forms: the traditional family of husband and wife and children, single parent families, blended families, families in which grandparents are the primary caregivers of their grandchildren, families made up of adults with foster children.

“The family is the original cell of society” (C 2207). It is prior to the state in origin. The state did not invent the family. Therefore, it has no right to reinvent it. The Christian family is a community of persons equal in dignity and a living symbol of the

unity of the Blessed Trinity. It is a “domestic church” in which the gospel of Jesus is taught by word and deed.

Duties of children (C 2214-2220, USC p. 377)

On *Holy Family Sunday*, we listen to the following reading from the book of Sirach.

*The Lord sets a father in honor over his children;
a mother’s authority he confirms over her sons.
He who honors his father atones for sins;
he stores up riches who reveres his mother.
He who honors his father is gladdened by children,
and when he prays he is heard.
He who reveres his father will live a long life;
he obeys the Lord who brings comfort to his
mother.
My son, take care of your father when he is old;
grieve him not as long as he lives.
Even if his mind fail, be considerate with him;
revile him not in the fullness of your strength.
For kindness to a father will not be forgotten,
it will serve as a sin offering—
it will take lasting root.*

(Sir 3:2-6, 12-14)

It is a wonderful and inspiring thing to see children love, honor and respect their parents. It is very sad and painful to see parents and children who are alienated from each other. Ideally, children are raised in a home by a mother and father who love each other and also love and cherish their children. But life being what it is, sometimes children are raised in very dysfunctional and unhappy home atmosphere. When this happens, it is much more challenging for children to live the fourth commandment which calls them to honor their father and their mother. Fortunately, there are many inspiring stories of adult children who were failed badly by their parents as youngsters and who were able, with the grace of God, to forgive their parents and reconcile with them.

In the home, children should be taught to respect, honor, love and obey their parents. This is usually a much easier task for children to achieve when they feel loved and cherished by their parents than for children who grow up in a home in which parents do not respect each other and are neglectful of their children.

Pause: What is your opinion on how parents are raising children today in contrast to how your parents raised you?

Parental duties (C 2221-2231, USC p. 378)

The awesome privilege and responsibility of parents is to allow themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit to help their children become the person God created them to be. As all parents know, no two children are the same. Each is unique and special. God has a special plan for each child. Parents who often seek the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit will play a very important role in helping their children discover and become the person God created them to be. More specifically, parents live out the parental aspect of faithful discipleship when they:

- *Attend to the physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and moral needs of their children.* It is a big challenge to keep these FIVE needs of children in proper balance. It is very easy for parents to over-emphasize one set of needs to the detriment of others. For example, if children are very involved in sports, (which can be very helpful to the character formation of a child), a particular sport may become more important than Sunday Mass. If the intellectual development of a child is overly emphasized, the emotional and social development may be neglected.

- *Develop the virtues.* In his letter to the Colossians, Paul says “You are God’s chosen ones, he loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another, forgive one another... Over all these clothes put on love” (Col 3:12-15). One of the most important and challenging roles of parents is to help their children grow in virtues that will help them follow God’s ways, help them to be responsible citizens and generally all around good people. Writing about this aspect of parental duties, Fr. Al McBride writes: “It will be hard to keep the commandments without the acquisition of virtues, grooved habits that incline the person to virtuous behavior. Children need training in virtues, through storytelling that inspires them to virtue, through good parental example, and finally through repetitive acts of virtue which ingrain these acts into their behavior and attitudes. Virtues also become the source of self-fulfillment.”

(Fr. McBride’s College Catechism, p.219)

- *Praying together.* It has been well said that “the family that prays together stays together.” Blessed are the children who know that prayer is important to their parents and who have parents that pray with them in their homes and church family.

- *Sacramental life of the Church.* An important part of a child’s formation is introducing them to the

sacramental life of the Church, helping them to grow in their appreciation of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This can be especially challenging in parishes where little efforts are made to involve children in the liturgy.

Pause: What are three or more characteristics of a strong family?

The fourth commandment and civic authorities

(C 2234-2246, USC p. 379)

Church teaching on the fourth commandment extends beyond family relationships to the duties of civic authorities and the duties of citizens within society. All authority—whether within the family, the Church or society—is from God and should be exercised in a way that is respectful of the dignity of others. No human authority should seek to establish any law that is contrary to the dignity of others or to the natural law. Government leaders should defend and protect the family as created by God. On the other hand, citizens have a duty to respect and obey legitimate civic authorities and to obey the laws of the state that promote the common good. This includes our moral obligation to pay taxes, exercise our right to vote, and defend the nation if attacked.

Civil disobedience. Citizens are not obliged to obey laws that are contrary to moral order (C 2242). In our time we have had outstanding examples of citizens refusing to abide by laws that discriminated against some persons because of race, color of their skin, etc. e.g., Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin L. King and their supporters.

Charter of family rights. In his apostolic exhortation *On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, Pope John Paul II cites a Bill of Rights for the family. As we read John Paul’s Bill of Rights, we can ask ourselves: where are some of these rights being denied or challenged in our world today?

“The political community has a duty to honor the family, to assist it, and to ensure especially:

- the freedom to establish a family, have children, and bring them up in keeping with the family’s own moral and religious convictions;
- the protection of the stability of the marriage bond and the institution of the family;
- the freedom to profess one’s faith, to hand it on, and raise one’s children in it, with the necessary means and institutions;

- the right to private property, to free enterprise, to obtain work and housing, and the right to emigrate;
- in keeping with the country's institutions, the right to medical care, assistance for the aged, and family benefits;
- the protection of security and health, especially with respect to dangers like drugs, pornography, alcoholism, etc.;
- the freedom to form associations, with other families and so have representatives before civil authorities" (Art. 46).

Pause: Negotiating the aging process and caring for elderly parents is a big issue today. What are your thoughts on this aspect of family life?

Suggested actions

If you tend to work too much, find a way to build times of relaxation into your week.

Pray for Catholics who no longer go to the Eucharist. If you know Catholics who are disconnected from Church, find ways to invite them to events at your parish.

Pray often for family members who are going through difficult times.

Consider fighting legislation that hurts the dignity of family life.

Meditation I

Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done in every conceivable human circumstance for every conceivable human need, from infancy and before it, to extreme old age and after it, from the pinnacles of earthly greatness to the refuge of fugitives in the caves and dens of the earth. Men have found no better thing than this to do for kings at their crowning and for criminals going to the scaffold; for armies in triumph or for a bride and bridegroom in a country church...for the famine of a whole province or for the soul of a dear lover...and best of all, week by week, and month by month, on a hundred thousand Sundays, faithfully, unflinching,

across all the parishes of Christendom, priest and people continue to work together in order to carry out this command, "Do this in Memory of Me."

(Don Gregory Dix O.S.B.)

Meditation II

*Lord God, we thank you for the gift of family.
We acknowledge that our image and name
as family come from you.*

*We believe that within our family
lies a homemade holiness.*

*We affirm that it is in this household of faith
that we experience your presence,
your forgiveness, and your love.*

We are family.

*We give thanks to you for the many joys and
blessings that have come to us through our family.*

As family, we sometimes feel pain.

*And so we offer to you our disappointments,
frustrations and hurts.*

*Help us to forgive those members of our family,
including ourselves, who have caused pain.*

*We pray for the strength
to be a light within our family.*

*May we open our hearts, our eyes and ears
and carry our light to those in need.*

*God, Creator of the earth and all its people,
help us to be mindful that,
as members of one global family,
we are equal in your eyes.*

*Help us to continue to appreciate the diversity
of persons in our homes and in our world.*

*As members equal in human dignity,
may we build a better world
and proclaim our willingness
to be the holy people you call us to be.*

Amen.

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