

**Holy Trinity Catholic Church**  
**RCIA Class Transcript**  
**The Commandments # 1 - 3**  
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Tonight we're going to look at the overview of the Ten Commandments, very briefly, and then we'll focus on the first Three Commandments, which have to do with our love for God. It's interesting, when we look at how the Commandments are divided up, the first Three Commandments have to do with God; the Fourth Commandment has to do with our parents; the Fifth through Tenth Commandments have to do with our relationship with neighbor.

The way that God worked it out is:

- The First Commandment is, "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me." That means we only worship the One, True God.
- The Second Commandment is, "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain."
- The Third Commandment is, "Keep holy the Lord's Day."

So you see, the first Three Commandments, because our relationship with God is most important, even more important than our relationship with parents or neighbors, that's why, I think, God revealed these Ten Commandments in this order, to show:

- The order of importance of loving God
- Honoring Him
- Worshiping Him alone
- Respecting His holy Name
- Worshiping Him on the Lord's Day

Then we have the bridge between God and the rest of the world, God, and neighbor; that is our parents. Our parents represent God to us when we're little, that they're God's representatives to raise us, and to form us in our Faith.

Commandments Five through Ten have to do with our relationship with our neighbor. For example:

- Number Five, "Thou shalt not kill"
- Number Six, "Thou shalt not commit adultery"
- Number Seven, "Thou shalt not steal"
- Number Eight, "Thou shalt not bear false witness"
- Number Nine, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife"
- Number Ten, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods"

We know that the Ten Commandments were given to us by God on Mt. Sinai, given to Moses; and then Moses brought these down to the people. It says in Scripture, "That God had written these on the two tablets of stone." Sometimes these are called the *Decalogue*, which means "The Ten Words of God," or, "The Ten Teachings of God."

If you read the Catholic Bible, and compare the Ten Commandments to the Protestant translation, you'll notice there's going to be a slight difference. What happens in the Protestant translation of the Scriptures, what they do, is combine Number Nine and Ten: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's property or spouse." That's considered the one commandment of Number Ten. In the First Commandment, in the Protestant Bible, it divides up, "I am the Lord thy God, you should not have strange gods before Me," and the Second Commandment is "You shall not worship graven images." (Referring to board) So, "A" and "B" come under Number One in the Catholic understanding of the Ten Commandments.

As you'll see in a few moments, how the First Commandment in the Catholic Bible is, "I am the Lord your God. Do not have false gods before Me." That includes the forbidding of worshiping of graven images; whereas, in the Protestant Bible, this is Number One, and this is Number Two. All the other Commandments get bumped. This becomes the Third Commandment; the Fourth; the Fifth; the Sixth; the Seventh; the Eighth; the Ninth; and then, the Tenth is combined from Number Nine and Number Ten. Sometimes, people look in the Bible and they say, "This doesn't make sense." Our enumeration is different.

The Catholic system is based on the Hebrew text, principally on the enumeration made by St. Augustine. This was adopted by the Council of Trent: "The First Commandment contains everything relating to the worship of false gods. The ten-fold division is safeguarded by dividing the last precept into coveting spouse and coveting property."

The English Protestant enumeration is based upon Origen. Origen was one of the early Christian writers. By it, the worship of graven images is numbered as the First and Second Commandment. To safeguard the ten-fold division, the last two Commandments are grouped together as the Tenth. Hopefully, that makes sense to you. It's really the same Ten Commandments. The only difference is that these two are combined in the Protestant text, and those two are combined in the First Commandment for us.

We are obliged to obey the Ten Commandments. These were given to us by God. As you noticed, they're not called the "Ten Suggestions!" They actually are given to us as Commandments by God.

Let's take a look now at the first Three Commandments, and delve into them; because, as you'll see, there are a lot of topics that come underneath these Ten Commandments.

The First Commandment, "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shall not have strange gods before Me." By this Commandment, we're commanded to offer to God alone, the supreme worship that is due to Him, and not set up any false gods. In the olden days, they would have a golden calf, that some people would worship. In our society, though, people have a lot of false gods. For some people, it's sports. For some, it's money, property, possessions - any number of things. It could be drugs. It could be alcohol. We in our society have lots of false gods that people put ahead of the One, True God.

This Commandment requires us to worship and adore God alone. He receives our adoration. Because God is three Divine Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), we worship the *Triune God*. We know there's only One God, and yet, God is revealed to us as three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). We worship the Father; we worship the Son; and we worship the Holy Spirit. As you remember from the class on the Eucharist, since the Eucharist is Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, we worship Him in the Eucharist. We use that word *latria*, which is "worship." That's only used for God alone: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as well as Christ in the Blessed Sacrament – the worship of God. Matthew, Chapter 4, says, "It is written: The Lord thy God shall you worship. Him alone shall you serve."

There are different ways in which we worship God. First of all, there's *public worship*, in which we adore Him. There's also *private worship*, which we call prayer. The public worship that we render to God, what is due to Him, is called the *Mass*. It's at the Mass that we worship the One, True God.

Under this particular topic, we should again refresh your memory about how we honor the saints, because we do not give them *latria*. This is given to God alone. The Latin word that we use for the saints and the Angels is *dulia*, which means "veneration." *Latria* is "worship" or "adoration;" *Dulia* is "respect," what's called "veneration."

Let's do a quick refresher on the difference between these two. This First Commandment forbids us to worship Mary, the Angels, the saints, images, or statues. That's all condemned in this First Commandment. We're only allowed to worship God alone: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What we do though, is that we give respect and veneration to Angels and saints, like our holy Guardian Angel that's with us all the time, to Mary, to the other saints in Heaven. We pay them respect and honor, because of their place in Heaven, because of God's grace, what God's grace has done for them. In our society, we honor great sports athletes. We honor people at the Oscars, or the Grammy Awards. We honor people who are great musicians, or great actors. We show them respect and

honor. We do this, of course, with great military figures as well, of the past. That's why we have things like Gettysburg, where we remember those who have gone before us, and who died for our country. People of World War I, Korea, or Vietnam, are United States soldiers who died for their country; we pay them respect and honor. We don't worship them; we don't worship anybody, except for God alone. However, we do show them respect. We respect the President, the Pope; we even call judges "Your Honor." It's that idea of showing respect. As I mentioned when we had the class on Mary, we give her special honor, which is called *hyperdulia*. This is special honor, because she alone is the Mother of God. She is the only one who ever bore God within her body. We give her special love and devotion; but again, it's not worship. That would be a terrible sin, to worship anyone but God alone.

When a person passes away, and the person had lived a very holy life, the Church then will open up their cause for *canonization*. There are different stages of the process of somebody becoming a saint. For example, Mother Teresa is now *beatified*. *Beatification* means they're "on their way to canonization." Usually, after a number of years, if the Church has examined their life, and studied their life, and their writings, they can call them *blessed*, which is the same as beatified. Right now, Mother Teresa is "Blessed Mother Teresa."

To be beatified or canonized, it takes one miracle for beatification, and then another one for canonization. Some of you have heard of Padre Pio, the holy priest who had the wounds of Christ in his hands and feet for 50 years. He's now canonized. He went through the process. The first process, actually, when a person's cause is introduced, the person is called a *Servant of God*. *Servant of God* means their cause has been, or is being, examined by Rome. Second, if their life is investigated, they can't actually open up a cause for canonization until five years after the person dies. Normally, they wait five years, and then they start looking into the person's life, to see if they can be declared a saint.

Then they become *venerable*. *Venerable* means that they examined their life, and their life was one of virtue. You can emulate them and follow their good example. In order for them to move from venerable to beatified, a miracle has to occur on Earth through that saint's intercession from Heaven. That's where this process comes through. Let's say, for example, we had somebody dying of cancer in the parish, and Mother Teresa, let's say, had just died, and we asked God to work a miracle through Mother Teresa's intercession. Let's say, we gave out a holy card to everyone in the parish, and everybody prayed that prayer that God would miraculously heal somebody of cancer through Mother Teresa's intercession. Let's say, for example, on a particular day, the person went to the doctor, and they had gone the month before and they were filled with cancer. They went back; they had more tests, and all the cancer was gone. This has happened on many occasions. That case would then be sent to Rome, who'd have medical examiners that would have to look at the previous medical records. The doctors would have to see that there was no cancer, and that it was a

complete miracle. If that was the case, then that would be approved, that God was letting the Church know that Mother Teresa was in Heaven, that she could be beatified.

It takes one miracle now, to have somebody beatified, and one additional miracle to have them canonized. Right now, Mother Teresa is at this stage, where she's blessed, and there are, I'm sure, many people praying that she'll be canonized.

The word *canon* means "a measuring rod." The Canon at the Mass is the Eucharistic Prayer that the priest reads, which includes the names of the saints. When a person was canonized, their names were put in the official book of the Mass. Now, there are over 2,500 canonized saints, so obviously, we can't read all those names at every Mass – we'd be there for five hours. So, the Church canonizes them, but their names are not said at every Mass.

We do honor the saints, because God gave them incredible graces. We can follow their good example. They were role models. Many of them were ordinary moms and dads. Many of them were doctors, or lawyers, or politicians. We can emulate the saints. We can follow their good example. We can imitate their virtues. We can also ask them to pray for us, because we know that they're in Heaven, and they can pray for us.

We know that the Bible talks about how the saints in Heaven are interceding for us on Earth. It's found in a few different passages in Scripture. In the Book of Hebrews, and the Book of Revelation, talks about the intercession of the saints.

We should pause for a moment also, under this First Commandment, to mention *relics* and *sacred images*. Relics are mementos that were used by a particular saint. It might have been some of the clothing that the saint wore. It might even be a lock of their hair, or a piece of bone from their body. These are the different saint's relics. These relics are not worshipped, of course. That would be a terrible sin. They are respected and venerated just like the graves of our loved ones. When we go visit the graves of our loved ones, we might place flowers there out of respect. That's a good thing, to venerate their bodies, because their bodies were the vehicles by which they lived in this world.

Relics were used in Scripture, in a couple of different places. For example, it says in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 19, "God worked more than the usual miracles by the hand of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons were carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out." This is something that God can use, the relics of the saints - things that the saints themselves used. In the Old Testament, Aaron's rod, Moses' rod, split open the Red Sea. We know that when the Lord healed somebody, He made like a mud paste and smeared the mud on their eyes, and they were cured. So, God uses material things often to work great miracles.

For example, in the Book of Kings, Chapter 13, Verse 21 it says, "When it had touched the bones of Elijah, the man came back to life." The Bible is filled with examples of how the relics of the Saints, the bones of the saints, or things that were used by the saints were respected by the early Christians.

As we talked about with the Blessed Mother, there are no first class relics of Mary. For example, we don't have any of her bones, because she was taken up into Heaven, body and soul. We call that the *Assumption of Our Lady*. Whereas, if you go to Rome, you can actually see the remains of many of the saints. For example, underneath St. Peter's, are the bones of St. Peter. I've seen them myself. Underneath the Church of St. Paul's, outside the city walls of Rome, are the remains of St. Paul. When the saint died, the early Christians respected those remains of the saints, and they placed them in the catacombs or in sacred tombs. These then were venerated, or shown respect.

We have this in our own society. If a President dies: a Kennedy, Lincoln, or Washington, we have their tombs; and we show them respect. We even show respect to our flag. We don't let the flag get trampled on, or fall to the ground, because it represents our country. These things are not idols. We do not adore these things. It's not the sin of idolatry. It's actually showing respect for sacred things.

We have examples of the Crucifix, the Bible; these are all holy things that remind us of greater realities. If somebody took a Bible, and then tore it to shreds, that would be sacrilegious; because this is the Word of God, and we need to always respect that. It's the same thing with Crucifixes – sometimes people in black masses, or the Satanists, will try to take a Crucifix, and they'll stomp on it. Many saints actually died, because they were told to stamp on and walk across the Crucifix, and they said they would not. Many Christians were put to death, because they would not trample upon a Crucifix.

Would it hurt Christ if they walked on the Crucifix? No, because it's just a symbol, just a reminder of God's love. But, because it was a holy thing, that Crucifix should be respected, just like the American flag. You wouldn't want to burn the flag, or trample on the flag, because it represents something higher. It's the same thing with the relics of the saints, the Crucifix, or the Bible – it represents those that we should honor and pay respect to.

Under this First Commandment, "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have any false gods before Me," there are some sins against this First Commandment. Let's just spend a moment looking at some of these things, like superstition, and other things that you're very aware of. Some of the sins against the virtue of Faith are:

- *Infidelity*
- *Apostasy*

- *Heresy*
- *Indifferentism*

Under this Commandment comes the worship of God. These are four sins that are contrary to the virtue of Faith. Let's take a look at these. Indifferentism, for example, says that all religions are equally good, and that it doesn't matter what religion you are; they're all equal; they're all the same. Often times, somebody says this when they're not willing to take the effort to look into the differences between the religions. Of course, as you know, there are many different religions. You have Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Methodist. You have all of the non-Christian religions. You have Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Then, you have other religions, even things like Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, and Seventh Day Adventists. There are even religions such as the Salvation Army (believe it or not, it's a religion), and Satanism is a religion. If somebody said all religions were equal, or the same, that would be incorrect. Obviously, there's a huge difference between, for example, Christianity and Islam; or Christianity and Judaism; or Buddhism and Hinduism versus Catholicism; or to an extreme, Satanism versus Christianity. Obviously, all religions are not the same.

What is apostasy? Apostasy is the complete rejection of the truths of the Christian Faith by one who has been baptized. It's somebody who was born and raised as a Christian, or a Catholic, who then rejects their Faith; that's called the sin of Apostasy. Probably one of the most famous ones was called Julian the Apostate, from the fourth century. He'd been baptized a Christian, but later on he rejected the Faith, and he tried to destroy Christianity. He had read in the Bible that if he could only rebuild the temple, that it would end Christianity. It was believed that if the temple was ever rebuilt, that would be the end of the world, and Christianity would be destroyed. He tried to rebuild the temple. When he did, earthquakes occurred, storms occurred, and he never was able to do that.

Then we have the sin of infidelity. It is similar to apostasy. It's the rejection of the Faith by one who has received it, or neglect to look into the Church's claims, when somebody refuses to investigate. In the past, sometimes they would call them "infidels." You've probably heard that expression. That's a person who does not believe in Christianity as a divinely revealed religion, and has refused to look into it. It's a refusal to believe in anything that cannot be perceived with their senses, or comprehended with their understanding. Somebody who is unwilling to look into the truths of the Christian Faith, would be guilty of what's called infidelity.

Heresy is the refusal of a baptized person to accept one or more of the truths revealed by God and taught by the Catholic Church. If the refusal is voluntary and obstinate, it's called *formal heresy*. If it's involuntary, it's called *material heresy*. Somebody who, let's say, would be a baptized Christian, but not accept certain teachings of the Bible, for example, or some of the teachings of the Church, would be considered falling into heresy.

What can we do to make sure we don't fall into these sins? The best thing we can do is to study our Faith, to practice our Faith, to pray for a strong Faith, to lead a good life, and do good spiritual reading. Be careful who you associate with, because they can influence you in improper ways. Make sure that you read good books that are accurate in portraying the teachings of Christ and His Church. Also, pray. If you have a struggle with the Faith, pray. Like the Apostles said, "Lord, increase our Faith." So, we should pray for a deeper Faith. And then, of course, lead a good life.

(A question). There's formal heresy, and then there's material heresy. If the refusal is voluntary and obstinate, then it's called formal heresy. If it's involuntary, it's material heresy. If the person doesn't know any better, it wouldn't be a sin at all. If a person knew that this is what the Church taught, but they were becoming very obstinate and saying, "No, I don't believe in Heaven," or "I don't believe in Hell, or Purgatory." It has to be one of the defined teachings of the Faith. For example, if someone says, "I don't believe that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist," then, obviously, that would be a heresy. Or, if they didn't believe that the Pope is the head of the Church, that would be heresy.

Whether it would be a mortal sin or not would depend on a number of factors. Remember, for a person to commit a mortal sin, it has to have three conditions. It has to be, first of all, serious matter; the matter must be of a very serious nature. The person has to have sufficient reflection; and third, there must be the full consent of the will. So, whether it would be a mortal sin would be whether or not all these things are present. Is it serious matter? Is it sufficient reflection? Is it full consent of the will?

You also have to make a distinction between what is the official *doctrine* and teaching of the Church, and what is a *discipline* of the Church. For example, if somebody says, "I only like Gregorian chant Latin music. I don't like guitar music." It has nothing to do with this. Or, if somebody says, "I only like Mass in Latin. I don't like Mass in English." Again, it has nothing to do with this. This is talking about *defined dogmas* or teachings of the Faith - for example, the Divinity of Christ. If somebody says, "I do not believe that Christ is the Son of God." That would be a heresy. Or, if somebody says, "I don't believe Jesus Christ rose from the Dead on Easter morning." These are major doctrines of the Faith. If somebody denied these things, they would be in heresy.

If somebody was still struggling with the teachings of the Church, what they need to do is pray, and to read, and to study their Faith. Read The Catechism; read books that explain the teachings of the Faith. For example, if somebody denied some of the official teachings of the Church, yes, that would be falling into heresy, and that would be wrong. If somebody is still struggling, and just has a tough time understanding, and says, "I don't understand the Blessed Trinity." Join the club, okay?! Do we believe in the Trinity? Yes, One God; three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Does a person say, "I don't understand it

completely; therefore, I am a heretic.” No, the person still needs to consent to get, “Yes, I believe there is One God and three Divine Persons.” What you need to do is look through the defined teachings of the Church, and make sure that you’ve worked through all those, before a person would embrace the teachings of the Catholic Church. For example, at the Easter Vigil, one of the questions is when we go through the Apostles’ Creed; “Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of Heaven and Earth?” “I do.” “Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son; our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary; was crucified, died, and was buried?” “I do.” Then, the last question is, “Do you believe and profess all that the holy Catholic Church believes and teaches to be revealed by God?” And the person says, “I do.” Those are the questions that will come up at the Easter Vigil.

If you had a specific subject or topic, it would be good to see where it falls in the categories of “Is it a defined teaching of the Church?” For example, Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory, those are a defined teaching of the Church. Limbo is not. Limbo is a place where unbaptized babies go, possibly. That’s not a defined teaching of the Church. If somebody says, “I don’t believe in Limbo,” they’re not a heretic. Or, if somebody says, “I don’t believe in Fatima,” which is a *private revelation*, they would not be a heretic. They’re not required to believe that teaching. If somebody says, “I don’t believe that there are seven sacraments,” that’s a defined teaching of the Church, that Jesus established Baptism, and the other seven sacraments. If anybody has a question about a particular topic, I can let you know if that is a defined teaching of the Church, or whether it is just speculation. I’d be happy to answer that.

Read [The Catechism](#). If you’re struggling with a particular Church teaching, make sure you read and study and pray. Talk to me individually. If I can help explain it more clearly, I’m happy to do that. I think it’s important, though, that a person should not become Catholic, unless they embrace all of the Catholic Church’s teachings. If they’re struggling with an issue, like homosexuality, abortion, birth control, divorce and remarriage, or cloning; then they work through that before they accept the teachings of the Church.

Usually, people don’t have problems with the doctrinal issues. They have problems with the *moral teachings* of the Church. There are very few people that say, “I can’t become a Catholic, because I don’t believe in the Divinity of Christ.” Those topics are not usually what keep them away. Usually, it’s the topics like Confession, the Pope, Purgatory, contraception, or homosexuality. Read, study, and learn, and meet with me if you have any concerns about these things that are still causing you difficulty and confusion. I’m happy to sit down and work through those with you.

It is okay to ask questions and to think, “Is this a teaching of the Church, or is this acceptable?” In the next few weeks, we’ll be going through many of these

teachings of the Church, when we go through the rest of the Ten Commandments.

(A question). The good thing about the Catholic Church is that none of the doctrines will ever change. They've never changed in 2,000 years, and they will never change. Again, always see the difference between a doctrine and a discipline. Disciplines would be things like eating meat on Fridays, Mass in English or Latin, whether married men would be admitted to the priesthood, or only celibate men admitted to the priesthood. Those are all disciplines. The doctrines could never change - things like the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, doctrines on Mary. For example, the fact that Mary was always virgin; that she had no other children - that's a defined teaching of the Faith; that Mary was assumed body and soul into Heaven - that's a defined teaching of the Faith.

Fortunately, none of the doctrines will ever change. These official teachings, such as respect for the sanctity of human life, the Church's teaching on abortion and contraception, euthanasia, divorce - those doctrines will never change, and could never change. Those are defined teachings of the Faith. Whereas, disciplines can change: meat on Fridays, liturgical music, Mass in English or Latin, facing the altar, or facing the priest, or not. Always see the difference between those two things. The Church will never come out and say that there are four Persons in the Blessed Trinity, for example. Or, come out and never say there are nine sacraments instead of seven. Those teachings will never change.

(A question). You're right, the Bible doesn't talk about cloning, obviously, nor does it talk about embryonics, stem cell research, in-vitro fertilization, or things like nuclear war. The Bible doesn't explicitly give a teaching on that. Remember, Christ didn't come to give us the Bible, He came to establish His Church - One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. He gave the Church the authority to teach.

He gave the Church the authority of the Holy Spirit to lead it into all truth. When the Bishops, in union with the Pope, come together to determine what is God's teaching about, let's say, cloning, they would use Biblical principles; and they would look at the 2,000-year history of the Church, and say what would be right and what would be wrong. This is actually a very strong case for the infallibility of the Church, whereas almost every other religion has watered down their teaching. Some say abortion is okay; homosexual activity is okay. Some say contraception is okay. Only the Catholic Church has remained steadfast, faithful, and true to the teachings of the Bible on these issues.

For example, up until 1933, all the Protestant Churches said artificial contraception was a mortal sin. In 1933, they began to water it down, but only the Catholic Church upheld the truth about that. That's actually the work of the Holy Spirit, to make sure the Church did not fall into error.

Does that mean everybody in the Church is holy? Obviously not, that's not what we believe, because the Church is made up of all of us, and we have saints and sinners in the Church. It's saying that the doctrines of the Faith can never change. Keep that in mind. I think that is actually one of the biggest supports, and why people become Catholic, because the doctrines won't change. There won't be any new doctrines, either. What the Church believed in the earliest days, we still believe today.

Do we understand things more fully? Yes, of course. We understand more about the Divinity of Christ than the Apostles did, because we've had 2,000 years to reflect on it. It's called the *development of doctrine*. There are no new teachings or new doctrines, but things get defined. For example, the Immaculate Conception wasn't defined until 1854. The Assumption wasn't defined until 1950. These were not inventions; they're not new doctrines. These doctrines were officially defined in these years, but they were believed since the earliest days of the Church, since the earliest days of Christianity.

Let's take a look, before we get to the Second Commandment, a little bit about *religion versus superstition*. There are four principal sins against the virtue of religion. Remember, the word religion comes from the Latin word "religio." Remember, "ligament" is what joins us, so religion is what joins us to God. The four main sins against the virtue of religion are *superstition, sacrilege, idolatry, and simony*.

The definition of superstition is when a person attributes to a creature a power that belongs to God alone. Superstitious practices (again, not all of these are mortal sins; some of them would be, others wouldn't) like using good luck charms, casting spells upon people, and fortune telling. Most of these are done today in a fun way; whereas, there are ways that a person could get deeper into these things, which could lead them to very serious things.

Realize that when the magician does magic tricks, it doesn't fall into this category. Those are sleight-of-hand tricks. Those are more like illusions. That's not dealing with magic, such as witches, warlocks, or fortune tellers that might deal in, or what's called spiritists. There are superstitious practices. People think that if they break a mirror, it's seven years of bad luck. Of course, that's ridiculous. If somebody has a rabbit's foot (of course, it wasn't very lucky for the rabbit, because it doesn't have its foot anymore), if somebody believes it has magic powers to protect you, or saying of spells, these things are obviously, not mortal sins, but they're improper; because they are attributing to a creature only power that should be attributed to God alone.

Spiritism, for example, attempts to communicate with the spirits of the dead. This is done through mediums or séances. It is a sin to go to a fortune teller, or to go to a séance, or to use ouija boards. Ouija boards, obviously, are not a mortal sin, when kids get together for a party, but it is dangerous. It can attract demonic

activity. When you have a group of 14-year old girls playing the ouija board, is that a mortal sin? No, but it shouldn't be done. It shouldn't be recommended, because it can lead them into the occult. It's like a doorway. If you open that door, you never know what could come through. It is dangerous, because there are many examples of how there is some demonic activity when a person opens themselves up to that. A person should avoid these things.

(A question). What's interesting is that actually, "luck" comes from the word "Lucifer." "Luc" means "light," and "Lucifer" meant "the bearer of light." Luck and Lucifer have the same roots. As Christians, we don't believe in luck. We believe in blessings from God. We believe in good things from God. When we wish somebody good luck, there's nothing wrong with that; that's fine. For example, not walking under a ladder, or when a black cat passes in front of you, that's not bad luck. There's no such thing as bad luck.

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Superstitions – are they mortal sins? No. Are they improper for Christians to do? Yes. We should not read the horoscope. People say, "It's harmless. It's just like reading the comics." Well, yes, it is just like reading the comics. Often times though, if we read that, it could influence how we act. It could affect us. We're opening ourselves up to other influences besides God. That's why it could be dangerous. To go to a séance because, when they're conjuring up the dead spirits, you never know. You think it's grandma talking to you, but it could be a demon from Hell that's appearing in this way. That's the danger about these things. You could be opening yourself up to evil, which could lead a person, let's say, from ouija boards into the occult. Take the Dungeons and Dragons game – I'm sure it could be harmless in the beginning, but it could lead to more of the occult, witchcraft, and things like black magic, white magic, and things like that. Be very careful of the occult, because you don't want to open yourself up to these evil possibilities.

(A question). Fortune cookies are different. Fortune cookies aren't horoscopes. They're usually wise sayings, like "Blessed is the man who takes his wife out to dinner on Valentine's Day!" It's just a wise saying. They're not real fortunes; they're more like tidbits of advice.

(A question). Buying a lottery ticket is fine. There's nothing wrong with that, if you buy it for our new parish of Holy Trinity, especially the Power Ball, because with \$150 million we could build a magnificent Basilica or Cathedral out here! I'll be happy to bless your lottery tickets even! You're allowed to buy a lottery ticket. Games of chance are okay. How many Catholic parishes have Bingo? Bingo is acceptable. I think over in Ireland, they call the numbers in Latin, so the Protestants can't win. Some gambling, that comes under a different Commandment. We'll cover that topic in a couple of weeks, a little bit more in detail. It's wrong to gamble if you're taking the rent money, and if you have a wife

and kids, and using all the rent money on the horses. That would be a sin. But, if you have an extra \$20, and you want to go to the slot machines, that's okay. Games of chance are fine, or buying a lottery ticket occasionally. If somebody used up all their money, instead of feeding their kids, and bought lottery tickets; that would be wrong.

(A question). Palm reading? Yes, that would be wrong, to deal with fortune tellers trying to do palm readings. Actually, one thing I will show you; one thing that everybody has an "M" on their hands, for the Blessed Mother. Did you know that? Look at your hand this way, and you'll see the initial "M." One of the saints said, "That's because Mary is our Spiritual Mother, and God has placed her in our heart, and on the palm of our hand." It's best to avoid the occult, just because of where it could lead.

What is a sacrilege? It's a kind of a blasphemy, consisting of a violation or profanation of a person, place, or thing consecrated to God. If somebody were to break into this Church, and desecrate the altar by pouring gasoline on it, and lighting it on fire, that would be a sacrilege. If somebody stole the Eucharist, the Blessed Sacrament, and used it in a black mass, that would be a sacrilege. If somebody killed a priest, or a nun, because they're a priest or a nun, that would be a sacrilege.

What is idolatry? Idolatry is when a person pays to a creature the supreme worship that is due to God alone. For example, if somebody worshiped Mary, statues, or an Angel, that would be a sin, because we should only worship God alone. We should always be careful of that, never to commit idolatry.

What is simony? Simony comes from the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 8, with Simon Magus. Simon Magus was the one who offered the Apostles money in order to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Simony is when a person buys or sells sacred or spiritual things for profit. It doesn't mean that you can't go to a local Christian book store, and buy a Bible. That's fine. What would be simony is, let's say, they said, "Here's your ten dollar Bible; but this Bible was blessed by the Pope, so this Bible is \$100." That would be the sin of simony. It's trafficking in religious blessings, or things like that. Even to acquire a relic from Rome, if you wanted a piece of cloth that was worn by St. Francis, you can't actually buy that – that's free. What you do though, is that the *reliquary* (the gold container it comes in), you give a donation of a certain amount for that; but it's not selling relics. You could buy them on EBay, but I wouldn't trust them – they might not be authentic.

When a priest says Mass, he's not selling Masses. Don't come in and say "I'd like to buy some Masses," because that's the Reformation. That got us into trouble, when some of the people in the Church were abusing that, and they were selling indulgences. You can't buy and sell indulgences. When you have a Mass said for somebody, you're not buying the Mass; you are making a donation, an offering, for the Mass being said. There's a big difference there. For example, it would be

wrong to say, “We’re now going to sell Masses for \$100 a Mass.” That would be the sin of simony. Somebody can come in to have a Mass said, and they can give a donation of \$5, or \$10, or whatever. The standard donation is \$10, but somebody can offer the small token of \$5, or even \$1, or even nothing, if they don’t have anything. We would still say that Mass. Keep that in mind.

Those are what we call “Sins against Faith.” Before we take our break, let me just mention that the sins against Hope are *presumption* and *despair*. These are opposite extremes of the virtue of Hope. Hope, like all the virtues, is in the middle. Presumption is when a person trusts he can be saved by his own efforts, without God’s help, or by God’s help without his own efforts. That’s the definition of presumption, thinking that the person will be saved, no matter what they do in the rest of their life, thinking that they can commit all sorts of terrible sins. They are just presuming that God will forgive them. If we want the virtue of Hope, we should be careful not to fall into the sin of presumption, thinking that it doesn’t matter what we do, God will save us no matter what.

The opposite of that is despair, when a person deliberately refuses to trust that God will give him the necessary help to save his soul. It’s when a person abandons all hope for obtaining eternal salvation. It’s called *The Sin Against the Holy Spirit*. If somebody doesn’t want to be saved, and says, “God could never save me; I’m too bad. I could never go to Confession; I’m too bad. I could never be saved.” They’re saying that their sins are bigger than God’s mercy. You always have to be careful never to let that happen. If somebody says, “My sin is too great to have forgiveness from God,” that would be despair. The way to overcome despair is thinking of the infinite mercy of God.

Lastly, what are some of the sins against the virtue of Charity? The First Commandment has to do with Faith, Hope, and Charity. Some of these sins against Charity are:

- *Sloth*, which is laziness
- *Envy*, jealousy of others
- *Scandal*

Sloth is a sin against Charity because it paralyzes the faculties of the soul, like one being too lazy to love God and love neighbor. Envy is sadness or unhappiness over another person’s good fortune. Scandal is causing or leading another person into sin.

Scandal is a terrible thing if you give scandal to somebody, because it means putting a stumbling block in their way. “Scandalon” in Latin means “a stumbling block,” or “putting a blockade in front of them.” When you scandalize somebody, you’re tripping them up in their walk to God. That’s why the scandals in the Church were so terrible, because people say, “I’m not going back to Church, because of all the scandals in the Church.” The reason why those are so bad is because they’re putting a stumbling block into a lot of good people’s Faith. In

saying, "I'm not going back to that Church," it's a terrible thing when those things happen. Hopefully people have a strong enough Faith to see through that. Because there are sinful members of the Church, it doesn't mean that they should "throw out the baby with the bath water." Yes, we need to throw out the bath water, but you can't get rid of the Faith. Don't get rid of your relationship with Christ, the Eucharist, and the sacraments just because of the sinfulness of some of the members of the Church.

The Second Commandment is "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain." By this Commandment, we're told by God always to speak with reverence about God, about holy things, to be truthful in taking oaths, and faithful to fulfilling our vows. We should always use God's Name respectfully. We don't want to use God's Name lightly, carelessly, or in vain.

The Name of Jesus is the most powerful of all names. The Lord says in John 16, "If you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it to you." It's always been the custom, when you hear the Name of Jesus, that you bow your head in respect. It says in Paul's letter to the Philippians, "At the Name of Jesus, every knee should bend, those in Heaven, on Earth, and under the Earth." In the Bible it says that people work miracles, "in the Name of Christ." For example, St. Peter said to the blind, and the deaf, and the lame, "In the Name of Christ, I command you to walk." The Acts of the Apostles says, "There is no other Name under Heaven given to men by which we can be saved."

Taking God's Name in vain means to use the Name of God, or the holy Name of Jesus, without reverence. This is something that is just so common, unfortunately. In TV shows and movies, you hear God's Name all the time, and it's terrible. What we should do if you hear God's Name being used in vain, is say a little prayer like, "Blessed be the Name of God." "Blessed be the Name of the Lord," would be a good prayer. Or, say the Our Father, because you say, "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name" (may Your Name be held holy).

What is *profanity*? Profanity is the use of irreverent language. There's also what is called *vulgarity*. To use vulgar words is not a sin, but it would be a breach of good manners. There's a difference between saying God's Name in vain and using some other kind of vulgarity. It's a sin if you use God's Name in vain, because that should only be used in prayer, loving conversation about God, or adoration.

The use of God's Name in vain is normally a venial sin. It's not a mortal sin. Obviously, it still should not be done. The Catechism says, "It is a sin to take God's name in vain," and ordinarily, it's a venial sin. If you do use it in vain, then say an Our Father right away to make up for it.

The definition of *cursing* is “calling down evil upon a person, place, or thing.” What most people today refer to as cursing is actually profanity or vulgarity. The true definition of cursing is when a person tries to put a curse or calls down evil upon a person, place, or thing. Obviously, a Christian should never curse. Psalm 36 says, “For such as bless Him shall inherit the land, but such as curse Him shall perish.”

There’s also what’s called the sin of *blasphemy*. Blasphemy is using insulting language to express contempt for God, either directly, or through His saints or holy things. Blasphemy is using abusive language against God, the Angels, or the saints. Deliberate blasphemy against God would be a grave sin, or mortal sin.

Under this topic of the Second Commandment comes what we call *oaths* and *vows*. An oath is calling upon God to witness to the truth of what we say. Taking an oath is also called *swearing*. When we think of swearing, we think of somebody using profanity or vulgarity. Swearing is when a person, obviously, calls upon God to witness their oath. For example, people making a solemn oath, placing their hand on the Bible, that would be swearing.

There are *simple oaths* and *solemn oaths*. A simple oath is between one man and another in ordinary conversation. A solemn oath is taken before an ecclesiastical or civil tribunal, like a court.

What’s necessary for making an oath lawful? First, we must have a good reason for taking the oath. We must be convinced what we say under oath is true. We must not swear when we take the oath.

A person who deliberately calls upon God to bear witness to a lie commits a very serious sin of *perjury*. Perjury is false swearing. It is a grave sin, a very serious sin to commit perjury because you’re swearing under oath. You’re deliberately telling a lie under oath.

Under this topic also comes the *vow*. A vow is a deliberate promise made to God by which a person binds himself, under pain of sin, to do something that is especially pleasing to God. Vows are made to God alone. For example, a nun makes a vow to worship and love God, and remain celibate. A priest makes a vow to do the same thing, not to get married, for example.

Vows are very pleasing to God, because they are a voluntary offering made to God. Wedding vows are sacred. When a couple makes their wedding vows, it’s something that’s binding until death do they part. You can make a vow in a Religious Order; that would be making vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Always remember the holiness of God’s Name. Isn’t it a shame that the holiest Name is the one that’s used the most in TV’s, movies, and the workplace?

(A question). Profanity or vulgarity is not a sin. It doesn't mean you should do it, because it's bad manners; it's unbecoming of a Christian. Is it a sin if you are nailing something, and the hammer hits your thumb, and you say whatever words you imagine? But, if you didn't use God's Name in vain, or the Name of Jesus, that wasn't a sin. If your kids are around, it could be a bad example to them, so you have to be careful. If you're all by yourself playing golf on the golf course, and you hit the ball into the water six times in a row, you can say all sorts of bad words if nobody else is around, as long as you don't use God's Name in vain. It's not a sin; but it would be unbecoming of a Christian, a priest, or even a lay person, to use vulgarity or profanity. In a strict sense, cursing is putting a curse, or wishing evil upon a person, place, or thing; whereas, profanity or vulgarity would not be a sin. Using God's Name in vain would be a sin, usually a venial sin.

(A question). Somebody might say, "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!" I'm sure you've heard that before. A lot of people say, "Oh my God!", or something like that, and that should not be done. Is it a mortal sin? No. Is a venial sin? Probably. Again, if it's a force of habit; we just need to get out of the habit. Some people say, "Oh my gosh!" which is the euphemism of God. We should even lean away from using those expressions, like "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!" It wouldn't be good to use that; you should pick other things, like "Moe, Larry, and Curly!" There's nothing wrong with that; I would just avoid using holy names and holy things, even in exasperation, because that's usually when we do that. It wouldn't be a serious sin, but it would be something that we should move away from, and not even use lightly or carelessly. The holy Name of God should always be respected.

Let me just mention the Third Commandment, "To keep holy the Lord's Day." This is the command to worship God on Sundays. In the days of the Bible, the Sabbath was a Saturday. That was the day the Jews kept holy. The Sabbath means "Saturday." The early Church, in the Acts of the Apostles, changed the Sabbath, or the holy day, from Saturday to Sunday. They did that for a couple of reasons. One is that, when Christianity broke off of Judaism, the Jews continued to worship God on Saturday. The Christians began to worship God on Sundays.

We have the command to keep holy the Lord's Day, because Christ rose from the Dead on Sunday. It was on Sunday that He sent the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. There are passages in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 20, and First Corinthians, Chapter 16, that refer to Sunday as "the Day of the Lord," or "the Lord's Day."

How do we keep holy the Lord's Day? Primarily by worshiping Him at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If it's impossible for somebody to attend Mass, if they're sick, or taking care of a sick child, then they're excused; that obligation is lifted. If they're sick, or there's two feet of snow, and you can't get out, or taking care of a

sick child, somebody who is very advanced in age, who cannot get out; then, they're excused, and that obligation is lifted.

We have a serious obligation to attend Mass each and every Sunday and Holy Day. If somebody misses Mass, again through their own deliberate choice, and it fills the three conditions of serious matter, full consent of the will, and sufficient reflection, it would be a serious sin, or a mortal sin, to deliberately miss Mass on Sundays or Holy Days. Keep that in mind, because it is only one hour out of 168 hours in a week. God only asks for one. If we can't give God the one hour, we're really telling God that we don't love Him above all things. We love other things more. We're committing idolatry by loving the football game, soccer, ballet, baseball, golf - whatever it might be, instead. It is a serious sin to deliberately miss Mass on Sundays or Holy Days, because it's certainly serious matter. Does the person have full consent of the will, and sufficient reflection? Those are the other two conditions that have to be there for it to be a serious sin. Again, if you're sick, or taking care of a sick child, then you're excused. It is a serious obligation for us, as Catholic Christians, to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days.

(A question). That's a great question about Saturday night Mass. In the Jewish history, the next day always began with the sunset of the day before. It's called the *vigil*, or "the night before." This is when the next day started. For example, with the Jews, the Sabbath was Saturday; but that started on Friday evening, when the sun went down, so that counted for the next day. The Holy Day actually starts the evening of the day before, so when we go to Mass on Saturday night, that actually fulfills our Sunday Mass attendance.

A good analogy of the one hour out of the 168 is, let's say, I gave you 168 one dollar bills as a gift, but as you were leaving, I said, "I need a dollar back, because I have to catch a bus, and I need to buy some bus tokens." If you said, "No, it's all mine!" I could say, "I gave you \$168. Why can't you give me one back?" You said, "No, it's all mine. I'm not going to give you that one back. I want it all for myself!" That's how it is if a person doesn't give God one hour a Sunday. God gives him 168 hours every week, and He says, "Just give Me one back." If you can't even give God one hour back, which is about 0.06 percent of your time, it's not even one percent of our time. Did you know that? It's less than one percent of our time. We should give God ten percent of our time, ten percent of our money, and ten percent of our talents.

The last thing you should remember is that Sundays should be a day of rest. What is forbidden on Sundays is unnecessary servile labor. We should not do that on Sunday. Sunday should be a day of rest. What we should do is to avoid anything on Sunday that takes the joy out of Sunday, such as unnecessary manual labor. A lot of kids will say, "That means I don't have to do my homework on Sunday," which of course, is not the case. That's not unnecessary, and that's not manual labor. For example, works of daily necessity are permitted on

Sunday, such as cooking, cleaning, sweeping, buying and selling necessary food; that can be performed on Sunday. You should try to keep Sunday as a day of rest, a day of recreation, a day of joy. Anything that takes the joy out of Sunday should be moved to a different day.

If somebody enjoys going out to the garden, and enjoys watering the flowers, that's not work. If somebody is out there digging up the entire back yard, that might not be enjoyable, so that should be done on Saturdays or other days of the week. Can you throw in a load of laundry on Sunday? Yes. See, for us doing laundry these days isn't that much work. Before, it was scrubbing, and then hanging. This is a lot different, just throwing it into the laundry machine. That's not really work; it's very easy to do. The thing you want to avoid, though, is you want to avoid having Sunday just be like the rest of the week, which is what has happened. Try to do your chores and your housework, all the other things you need to do, on the other days of the week, including Saturday. Sunday is a fun day, a family day, a day of enjoyment, a day for reading, going to Mass, and enjoying the family time. Yes, do you have to cook a meal? Of course, cook the meal; do the dishes. Those things are fine to do. Sunday should be a day of relaxation, rest, and enjoyment. Don't forget about that. I think, we as Christians, have unfortunately, lost Sunday as a day of rest and enjoyment.