

Holy Trinity Catholic Church
RCIA Class Transcript
The Commandments # 6, 9
Lecturer: Father Francis Peffley
Date: March 1, 2005

Tonight's topic is the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. We only have a few classes left until the end of the year. Before we get into that topic, and before our guest speakers come up, I want to just answer these questions that were in the question box.

The first one is, "Why is it that before some saints, there's a 'St.' and before others it's a 'Bl.?' Sometimes even on stained glass windows you'll see those letters. Of course, "St." stands for saint, and "Bl." stands for blessed. One of the things we probably didn't have a chance to talk about was the canonization process, of how people are declared saints by the Church. For instance, Mother Teresa died, and normally it takes five years for that cause to be introduced in Rome. So, five years after a person's death, their cause is opened. They begin to examine the life that that person lived, to interview people that knew that person, if there are people still around. They become what's called a *Servant of God*. It means their cause is officially started, to see if they lived a life of heroic virtue; a life of holiness. If that's the case, they're then moved to be *Venerable*, which means their life has been examined, and they did live a life of virtue.

For the Church to define infallibly that that person is in Heaven, a miracle has to be worked through that person's intercession. Let's say there might be somebody dying of cancer. If that's the case, then we would ask that saint to intercede for us, to pray to God on our behalf; just as I can pray for you, and you can pray for me, so we believe that those in Heaven can also pray for us. We ask for a particular miracle, and often times, a great miracle will occur. If that's the case, then the person would then be declared *Blessed*, that God worked that miracle through that saint's intercession. Just as God worked miracles through St. Paul and St. Peter in the Acts of the Apostles.

To be *Beatified* or *Blessed* needs one miracle through that person's intercession after their death. Then, one more miracle is needed to be declared a saint. That's the *canonization process* – *Servant of God*, to *Venerable*, to *Beatified*, then *Blessed*, and then to a canonized saint. What the Church means when it canonizes a saint, and the Canon is the Eucharistic Prayer that is said at Mass where it lists the saints. The word originated because when somebody was canonized, they were added to the Canon of the Mass, or the list of saints that were said at Mass. Right now there are about 20,000 saints in the Church, and we can't list them all. Think how long that Mass would be on Sunday if we had to list all those saints, so we just keep it pretty short. We mention Mary, Joseph, and maybe a few others.

The other question in the question box says, "What makes a cathedral a cathedral?" There's only one cathedral in each diocese. A cathedral comes from the Latin word "cathedra", which is the Latin word for "chair." It's the church that is the Bishop's church, where the Bishop's chair is, from which he preaches, and presides at Mass.

The next question is, "Why are there no plants in the church during Lent?" You're allowed to have plants, like this one here, but we don't have flowers in the church during Lent. Flowers are a sign of festivity, and joy, and we want to save that for Easter. Lent is a time of prayer, preparation, and penance. You'll see maybe palm branches in the church, or you'll see ashes, or you'll see some plants. Flowers are kept out of the church during Lent, and that makes it all the more special to see the flowers during the Easter season.

The Alleluia is not said or sung during the Lenten season. My sister teaches a Catholic Montessori class. They actually have a plaque that says Alleluia. On Ash Wednesday, they bury that in the ground. Then, 40 days later on Easter, they dig it up. It makes a big impression on the kids, that you don't say the Alleluia for that time period; then you dig it up, and you can say that again. Alleluia is a song of rejoicing to Almighty God.

The last question is, "When we give the Sign of Peace at Mass, what should we say?" As you know, the Sign of Peace comes right before we receive Communion. The priest says, "Let us offer each other the Sign of Peace." Husbands and wives can give each other a little kiss, or a hug, or you shake hands with a person. What should you say? The best thing to say is, "Peace be with you," because that's how Jesus always greeted His disciples. Peace is a great gift from Almighty God.

It also says, "I never have time to shake hands with all the people around me. Should I just concentrate on my own family? It seems like we rush through this part. Somebody told me they may get rid of it one day." The Sign of Peace is optional. The priest doesn't have to do that. He could skip that part and just go right into the Lamb of God. The Sign of Peace is a very Biblical idea. Jesus said, "Before you bring your gift to the altar, if you realize your brother has something against you, go and be reconciled with your brother first. Then offer your gift at the altar." The idea is that you reconcile. If the husband and wife have been fighting that week, you say, "Peace be with you," which means "I forgive you; I love you; I accept you." It's a sign of reconciliation between spouses, between parents and their children, between brothers and sisters.

(A question). The question about whether or not the Sign of Peace would be gotten rid of, I think it will always be optional in the Mass. It's just up to the priest whether or not he wants to do it or not. He can skip it. Sometimes at school Masses with 600 kids, it's better to skip it because the kids get so wound up; they

go running all over, saying hi to their friends; it's tough getting them back, focused on the Eucharist, the Body of Christ that they're about to receive. Sometimes it's a good idea to skip it in certain circumstances. I would prefer that it be earlier in the Mass, right at the beginning of the Mass, when we say, "I confess to Almighty God, to you my brothers and sisters..." because then, you can still offer each other the Sign of Peace. As the Mass continues, we turn our focus from the people to the altar, and preparing to receive the Lord in Communion. Sometimes people feel the Sign of Peace is distracting, because they're just about to say the Lamb of God, kneel down, and receive the Lord in Communion. They feel it's a little bit distracting to be shaking everybody's hand.

First, the Sixth Commandment is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The Ninth Commandment is, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's spouse," (thy neighbor's wife; thy neighbor's husband). Under this Commandment, we'll talk about the indissolubility of marriage. We'll talk about the importance of fidelity in marriage.

What are the topics that come under this Commandment? Not only adultery itself, but other sins against the holy Sacrament of Matrimony. There are a number of them. The one we will spend a little bit of time on, and have our guest speakers come up and talk about, would be the sin of contraception. This is one of the topics that we want to spend a little extra time on, because, when it comes down to it, people really don't have a big problem with the Trinity, or the Divinity of Christ, or the Resurrection. People tend to accept those teachings readily, but some of the other teachings, like homosexuality, abortion, contraception, or sterilization, these moral issues – those are the ones that people have a very difficult time with. They don't understand why the Church teaches that contraception is a serious sin, or why God teaches that through the Church.

(The guest speakers gave their presentation at this time. Their comments are not included in this transcript. After their presentation, Father Peffley resumed speaking.)

The basis of the Church's teaching on the beauty of sexuality is based upon:

- The dignity of the human person
- That we're made in the image and likeness of God
- That we're temples of the Holy Spirit

St. Paul tells us in First Corinthians, "Do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit?" and "Glorify God in your bodies." Our bodies are sacred. We're made in God's image and likeness. The Sixth and Ninth Commandments really remind us of respecting our own body, and the bodies of others, especially one's spouse. Again, it is based upon our dignity as created human beings made in God's image and likeness.

We need to touch on a few points before we leave the topic of contraception and take our break. Afterwards, I'll deal with a few other topics under this Commandment.

The difference between *contraception* here and *Natural Family Planning (NFP)* here is that contraception is contrary to nature. It's not just because contraception is artificial is why God is against it, because God is not against all artificial things. Contact lenses are fine. Eye glasses are fine. Pacemakers are fine. Hearing aids are fine. It's not the artificiality of the contraception that makes it wrong. The artificiality of a pacemaker, for example, that helps to assist the heart. Those things all work in accordance and try to improve nature; this works contrary to nature – against; whereas Natural Family Planning works with the natural cycles of fertility and infertility which God Himself has put into the woman's body. A study said men are fertile 31 days out of the month; women, a certain period each month, 4 days or whatever, about a hundred hours, let's say, each month. With a day on each side, just for an extra little buffer, the husband and wife can abstain from marital relations during that fertile time of the month, during those five days or seven days, and not have marital relations during that time. It's perfectly acceptable in the eyes of God to abstain from having marital relations at a particular time of the month.

NFP respects the body: the body of the man, and the body of the woman. It does not violate the marital act, whereas contraception does violate the sacredness of the marital act, which is holy ground. When Moses went up the mountain, what did God say, "Take your shoes off, because you are on holy ground." Sexuality is very sacred, very holy ground. We live in a society which has desacralized this. I think we should remember that sexuality is sacred; it's so holy, and that contraception is a sacrilege against the holiness of the marital act. It deliberately interferes with the marital act, by condoms, pills, and IUD's. It deliberately interferes with the holiness of the self-giving, self-donating act of love between husband and wife.

With Natural Family Planning, you're merely abstaining. You're saying, "I'm not going to show love for you in a physical way," and then you focus on communication, going out for dinner, buying flowers, and really courting the person again. That's why they mentioned last month that in Natural Family Planning, you have sort of the honeymoon phase every month: where you don't focus on the physical, you focus on the spiritual; the communication; the hugs; the kisses; and trying to show love in other ways than the physical way.

Another difference, of course, is that Natural Family Planning respects the love and life aspects of marriage. The marital act of intercourse is for the purpose of giving love toward your spouse, and bringing about new life. In contraception, the contracepting couple is deliberately violating this life aspect. They're saying "no" to life. Some of you might have heard that expression, telling God, "We're having

a party – You're not invited." Do you see the difference there? That's the idea – you want to keep God in your marriage, in your sexuality.

All of us know that sexuality is for both love and life. We all can see how if one of those two principles is violated, it renders that action immoral. If someone deliberately goes against the life principle it renders that act immoral, like contraception.

Also, if the love aspect of intercourse was deliberately violated, that would render the act immoral too. Take for example, the case of a rape. Let's say, in a rape the woman gets pregnant. The life aspect was there. It's still a sin, because there was no mutual love in that action. Remember, sexuality is a self-giving, and so that's why a rape would be immoral, even if it brought about a new life. The life is sacred. That child deserves to live. The life aspect was open in that act, but the love aspect was violated; therefore, the rape is immoral. In contraception, the husband and wife still, in their mind, are showing love to each other, but it renders the action immoral, because they are deliberately violating the life aspect of that.

Another example, let's say, of Henry VIII, or some king, and all he wants is an heir to the throne. He says, "I'm going to force myself upon my wife tonight, not out of love" (but almost in the case of marital rape) "just to have a child." If it's not a self-giving, mutual act of love between husband and wife, it would render that act immoral; if he forced himself upon his wife, even though he was open to this aspect, he's still violating that mutual love aspect.

We get to topics like masturbation, and sins of impurity, the reason why those are wrong; and why that's a serious sin. It is a serious sin because both the love aspect and the life aspect are violated, because the impure act in that way, would not be showing love to your spouse, nor be life-giving. It's purely a selfish act. That's why in the Bible, and in the teachings of the Church, that sin of impurity is always considered a serious sin, if those other conditions are met: it's grave matter, if the person has full consent of the will, and sufficient reflection.

Just remember in this teaching of the life and love aspect of sexuality, and how Natural Family Planning preserves the dignity of the human person, and it does not violate the love aspect or the life aspect, because all the couple is doing in NFP is abstaining during that fertile time of the month. There's nothing wrong with abstaining. Couples are allowed to abstain. In fact, the Bible talks about the benefits of couples that would abstain occasionally in their marriage.

(A question). Some of my dear friends who teach Natural Family Planning have one child, or two children. Often times, the others have five kids or six kids. One of the points they touch on, then I'll get back to you in a second, is this idea of responsible parenthood. This is right in the document *Humane Vitae* that was mentioned. It's a little pamphlet about 18 pages long, it's very short. *Humane*

Vitae was written by Pope Paul VI in 1968. It's the Church document on human life. That's the name of the document. In that, it talks about the Church or God is not expecting you to crank out as many kids as you can physically handle. That's not in the teaching of the Church. You don't have to do that. The Church actually talks about responsible parenthood. For some couples, that could mean a large family, of being extra generous. They can have a larger number, and that's a wonderful and beautiful thing. For other couples, responsible parenting would mean, perhaps, a smaller number of children. It's all based upon a lot of factors, and this is a factor you have to pray about, and see what God is telling you in your heart. What is your physical health? What is your age? What is your financial situation? What is your emotional health? What's your capacity to be able to handle the kids? There are a number of factors. Are you living in Iraq right now? Or, are you living in Saudi Arabia, where it would be very difficult to have children, perhaps? There are factors, and couples are certainly allowed to use Natural Family Planning, if there is legitimate or serious reason.

Couples should be very careful of being selfish, such as saying, "We only want one or two children."

(At this point, the first side of the tape ended. It resumes below).

(A question). One of the amazing things is that children are incredible blessings of Almighty God. That's one of the things we often forget. Children are not curses, or burdens, or diseases. The world puts all these things in children. They list pregnancy, like AIDS, as one of the things in the lists of diseases. We have to get away from that attitude toward children, and see every child as a precious gift of Almighty God, made in His image and likeness. Every child will live forever. Imagine that – raising up saints for God, raising up children that will worship God for all eternity, in perfect happiness, in Heaven. It's an amazing thing, the worth of one human being, is incredible. It's a matter of maybe reprioritizing that, and a couple others here today talked about making those sacrifices for the sake of the great gift of life, the gift of having another child, which is an incredible, precious gift of Almighty God.

To answer your question, there is no document, there are no Church teachings that give you a list "if you earn this much a year, you can have this many kids." That doesn't exist. The couple should pray about it. The couple should study, learn, read these documents, read the Bible and what God has said in the Bible about the blessing of children, about the importance of marriage and married life, and then to really take it to prayer. Talk to a priest; someone you can work through those issues with. Talk to each other as a couple. Pray to the Holy Spirit for enlightenment, guidance, and wisdom. That's really the only answer I can give you.

(A question). I think their point was that God did provide for them, when you trust in God, trust in the Lord. Amazing things do happen, and people do come

together. God can encourage other people to be generous and helpful to coming to those in need.

The point to always remember is that children are a blessing from God. God often times works through the children to get the parents back to Church, like when the kids are born, and when you want to get them baptized, that often times gets the parents back to Church. Or, when the child makes First Communion; that child can bring you closer to God. Bishop Sheen also said, "When you see a child, you should see the incarnation of love between husband and wife, that the marital act is so beautiful, so wonderful, and so mysterious, that love between husband and wife actually becomes another living human being." Isn't that amazing? You see a little baby; that baby is the love between husband and wife that has become incarnate.

(A question). A lot of parents say that when they have children, their capacity for giving love does expand. That's something to keep in mind too. You might think, "Oh, how can I handle this," but they say that capacity does expand with the children.

We'll finish up now, over these next ten or twelve minutes, again going back to, in general, the Sixth and Ninth Commandments, "Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife," also, obviously including your neighbor's spouse. This commandment deals with the virtue of purity, the virtue of modesty in our actions, as well as in our thoughts and desires. When it says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," it's referring to the action; "Thou shalt not covet" is referring to the heart, to the thoughts, to the desires.

Adultery, obviously, is a terrible sin. Unfaithfulness of married persons is a terrible sin for many reasons. Marriage is supposed to reflect the unity of Christ and His Church. When adultery is committed, it's a great evil, because it hurts that unity, that harmony that should exist between husband and wife. Not only is it a sin against chastity, which is the virtue of purity, but also, adultery is a sin against justice. It's an injustice to one's spouse to commit adultery, because the two have become one. The Bible says, "Man shall leave his father and mother, and cling to his wife. The two shall become as one, and what God has joined man must not divide." It's the worst betrayal within a marriage, which is a very difficult thing for couples to work through. Of course, many couples, by the grace of God, have been able to get through that, sought counseling and God's healing; and often they have been able to work things out, and rebuild that trust which certainly was violated. Matrimony is a holy state; it's something very sacred, very holy. When couples get married, they say they're going to be faithful, and to enter into an indissoluble union that lasts until death do they part.

Other sins against the Sixth and Ninth Commandment would be the sin of *fornication*, which is the sin of sex outside of marriage, or sex before marriage. There are a couple of good articles that we gave you tonight, which I would

encourage you to take home and read. This one talks about, from the Style section of The Washington Post, “Until Marriage Do Us Part,” which shows that if couples live together before marriage, they have a higher divorce rate. This talks about the problems of living together before marriage. This is very good, this one called “What Does The Bible Say About Premarital Sex?” It lists the quotes from Jesus, and the quotes from St. Paul on the word fornication. It talks about how 14 times in the New Testament it’s described as an immoral action, that sex is something so good, so holy, so sacred; it’s only to be used within the holy state of matrimony, between husband and wife. Sex before marriage is wrong in the eyes of God.

One analogy that we often use with the teenagers is that fire is a good thing, in its proper place, in a fireplace. But, fire outside of that, can burn down the whole house. That often times happens that sex outside of marriage can lead to unwed mothers; it can lead to babies born without a mom and a dad to provide for them. In God’s plan, He would want children born into a home with a mother and a father. Every child that’s conceived, no matter how it’s conceived, in cases of premarital sex, or even in cases as terrible as rape, that child is still precious; it’s still a gift of God. God brings good, and can bring good, out of every situation.

We even have canonized saints. St. Martin de Porres was a child who never knew his father. His mother did her very best in raising this young boy, who became a great saint. God can bring good out of every situation, like I said. We have a canonized saint that was born from a relationship of a man and a woman who were not married. God can bring good, because remember, every child, no matter how it’s conceived, is a precious gift of God. Once it’s baptized, it becomes actually a Child of God.

I would recommend reading the handouts that we have for you. This one is also good, “What’s Wrong With Living Together Before Marriage?” That also covers some of that topic.

Very briefly we’ll touch on the topic of *homosexuality*, what the Bible teaches; what the Church teaches about homosexuality. Basically, the Church does not condemn homosexual persons, only the homosexual activity. The Church upholds the dignity of each and every human person, no matter what their orientation may be. We respect people of different colors, different races, and the Church really emphasizes that point, this respect for the dignity of each and every human person.

However, the Bible condemns as sinful homosexual activity, the action, not the person. Does everybody see the difference there? Even if a couple has sex before marriage, boyfriend or girlfriend, the Church does not condemn the individual; the Church prays for that individual, wants that individual to come back to God, to get to Heaven, obviously. But it does not approve of sinful actions, such as premarital sex or homosexual activity. Again, sex is something very holy,

very sacred. As I mentioned, it's with a love-giving and a life-giving aspect. The homosexual activity violates the life-giving aspect, just as masturbation would violate the life-giving aspect; and also, as I mentioned, the love-giving aspect is violated too, with that sin of impurity.

The Pope has written that we must respect the person, but not approve of the sinful action. That's again very important. I would recommend reading The Catechism on those topics, because like I said, we don't have as much time to go into that as I would have liked. I think it's a very good treatment of that in The Catechism.

The other topic that comes under the Sixth and Ninth Commandments are things like pornography, immoral books and magazines, and movies. See, people are addicted to many things. They are addicted to gambling. Some people are addicted to alcohol; some to drugs. Unfortunately, some to pornography, which is a terrible thing, because that sin downgrades everybody involved. It downgrades those who are involved in the making of it, whether it be the producers of the bad movies, or the people that are in the bad movies or magazines.

It also degrades the person themselves in doing that. Our Lord talks about this in one of the Gospels, Matthew, Chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount. He says, "You've heard the Commandment 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you, whoever looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart." This is the sin against the Ninth Commandment, to make sure that a person does not only commit the action, but doesn't even lust after that person of the opposite sex, or the same sex. It violates the dignity of that person, seeing that person as an object, rather than as a Child of God. It of course leads to many other crimes. If you read the accounts of rapes and other things, you'll see that they had this terrible addiction to immorality, impurity, and pornography. It's a terrible scourge of our country. It's such a billion dollar business. There are so many addictions that people can have in that way. It requires a lot of God's grace, just like to give up drugs or alcohol; it requires a lot of God's grace to get rid of that addiction.

To wrap up now, there are a lot of temptations out there in the world against the virtues of purity and chastity. There's a difference, obviously, between a *temptation* and a *sin*. We should spend just a moment letting people know about the difference, because temptation is not a sin. Somebody could be tempted. Let's say they get a bad thought that comes into their mind. They see somebody that they're attracted to, and they get this bad thought. That thought is not a sin, unless it's consented to, or dwelt upon. Once the person realizes it's there, if they reject that, and say, "I do not consent to that thought," and then say a prayer like an Our Father or a Hail Mary, they push that temptation out of the way. That was not a sin.

If however, they dwell upon that thought, cultivate it, and harbor it, and consent to it (give into that thought in their thoughts, words, or actions), then it would become a sin. Keep that in mind. We're not responsible for the bad thoughts that might come into our mind, but it's what we do with those thoughts that make a difference. We can either give into them, or we can reject them. Mere temptation is not a sin.

The Church teaches us that the best ways to live the virtue of chastity and the virtue of purity are first, to avoid the near occasions of sin. Let's say, if somebody is an alcoholic, they should not go hangout at the bar – that's just not a wise thing to do. If somebody has a gambling addiction, they should not go the horse races. Or, if they do, they should go with a friend, and say, "I'm only going to spend ten dollars, and that's it." You have to make sure that you don't put yourself into the occasion of sin. An *occasion of sin* is a person, place, or thing that would lead you into sin.

For some people, they could go to a bar, and they have no problem. They would not get drunk if they go into a bar. That would not be a near occasion of sin for somebody. For another person, who is an alcoholic, yes, that would be putting themselves into the occasion of sin. For some people, the Internet is not an occasion of sin, but for others, it is a terrible occasion of sin. So, they have to get those programs, where they can download it, like WebChaperone, or CyberSitter. They can get a friend of theirs to come in to download the different services that would block out any bad sites. Of course, you as parents, have to do this yourself, so the kids cannot access any immoral websites. It's such a terrible thing. Television can be a great thing; it can be a blessing or a curse. The Internet can be a blessing or a curse. Money can be a blessing or a curse. See, all these things are neutral. You could use them for great good, or you could use them for great harm and destruction. There's nothing evil in itself about television, or the computer, or money. These things can be used for good; they can be used for bad. But if you're parents, and you don't have some sort of a screening process on there, and if your kids get into that bad stuff, then God's going to hold you accountable for what your kids see. That's why you have to make sure these programs are on the computer so they cannot access these bad things.

To avoid the near occasions of sin:

- Prayer is the other main support to remain close to God
- Develop a prayer life, not just saying prayers, but actually praying, talking to God
- Go to frequent Confession; go to regular Confession once a month to help keep you strong in the Faith
- Go to frequent Holy Communion, receive the Lord in the Eucharist on a regular basis if you're in the state of grace
- Attend Mass

- Have a special devotion to the Blessed Mother, who's such a beautiful model of purity and holiness; her prayers are very powerful
- Have a devotion also to your holy Guardian Angel, realizing that God has given you an Angel to be with you at all times, to help you during times of temptation

I think those cover the topics of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. Again, try to read the articles and the handouts we've provided for you. Read The Catechism; don't just come to class and listen to the lecture. That will obviously be helpful, but there's a lot more in The Catechism about these teachings on adultery, homosexuality, and contraception. I would recommend, if you can, to do a little bit of reading as well. As was talked about earlier, these are the most difficult issues that you're going to have to face and deal with. Like we said, people don't really have a problem that much with the Blessed Mother, the saints, and the angels; some do, but it's usually the moral issues that are the problem with most people.

One last thought: "Is Jesus Lord of your life?" Do you know what the word "Lord" means? Remember, in the olden days, you'd have a Lady and the Lord. If you were a serf, or a servant, you worked for the Lord. The expression that is in the Bible, everybody calls Jesus, "Lord." The question is, "Is Jesus Lord over all the aspects of your life?" Obviously, He's Lord every time you go to church on Sunday; He's Lord at Mass. He's Lord when you say Grace at Meals. But is He Lord over what takes place in your home, in your marriage, in your sexuality, in your raising of the kids? Is Jesus Lord? Is He King? Is He ruler over all these aspects of your life? Not just one hour a week, but also is He Lord in the kitchen? Is He Lord in the bedroom? Is He Lord throughout the whole house, or do you just give Him Lordship one hour a week at church? It's a good question to ask ourselves. "Is Christ Lord over all the aspects of our life?"

Next week's a much easier topic. Next week is the Seventh, Eighth, and Tenth Commandments, which are very good topics. "Thou shalt not bear false witness," will deal with the topic of lying and gossiping and those issues. We'll deal with the topic of stealing, and envy, and jealousy. So there are some good topics next week. Then, after that, we just have a few classes left.