

Hurricane Katrina devastated vast regions of the Gulf Coast in the United States in 2005. Thousands of neighborhoods were destroyed, and people were suddenly without homes, food, and the basic necessities of life. Many hurricane victims set off to other parts of the country in search of help and resources. Several hundred made a 1,600-mile journey to settle on a military base in Middletown, Rhode Island, which was offering shelter to people affected by the hurricane.

Like people in so many other communities, these Rhode Island residents came together to welcome the people affected by the hurricane and provide resources for them. They donated food, toys, and clothing. They volunteered their time to watch the children of those applying for jobs in their new community. The people who had fled the hurricane, in turn, came together to help one another. They volunteered their time to sort and oversee the food pantry at the shelter. If they had cars, they loaned them to their new neighbors to transport needed items.

Despite desperate circumstances, a new community of neighbors was forged and strengthened by the efforts of many.

Activity Complete the following.

The Rhode Island residents and the Gulf Coast residents were "neighbors" because they:

I have been a neighbor to others by:

Aerial view of neighborhoods in New Orleans, Louisiana flooded by Hurricane Katrina



“One needs a neighbor on whom to practice compassion,” wrote Phyllis McGinley (1905–1978), American Catholic poet and author.

BELIEVING...

We live out the seventh commandment.

Stealing is any action that unjustly takes away the property or rights of others. What does it mean to steal from someone? Our answer to this question can enlighten us about how well we are living out the seventh commandment. **The seventh commandment is "You shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15). It is based on justice—respecting the rights of others and giving them what is rightfully theirs.**

Living according to the seventh commandment means giving people the things that are rightfully theirs by:

- being God's stewards of creation—caring for the world that God has given us, protecting our environment, using the gifts of creation in a responsible way, and remembering that the world's resources are not only God's gift to us but also to the generations of people to come
- caring for the things that belong to us and respecting what belongs to others
- not taking things that are not ours, even things such as the answers to a test, someone else's homework, or the ideas of others
- treating all people as valuable and important, no matter who they are
- appreciating human work as a participation in the work of creation
- showing respect for the goods and property of others and not damaging the property of others on purpose
- working to help all people, especially those who are poor and powerless, to share in the gifts of the earth and sharing our own goods, as necessary, with others who are in need
- giving alms as a work of justice
- making reparation, or amends, for injustices.

Faith Words

stealing
justice

Jesus lived his life exemplifying the way to live justly and fairly. And he asks us to do the same. Striving to live the moral life that God has called us to live and working for justice are not simply choices for disciples of Jesus and members of the Church; they are requirements.

Activity Take a few moments to think about ways you have followed the seventh commandment. How have you:

- cared for the gifts of creation?
- taken care of your belongings?
- respected the property of others?
- been honest in taking tests and playing games?
- shared what you have with those who are in need?
- worked with your family, parish, or school to care for those who are poor and make their lives better?
- performed acts of kindness and service for others?

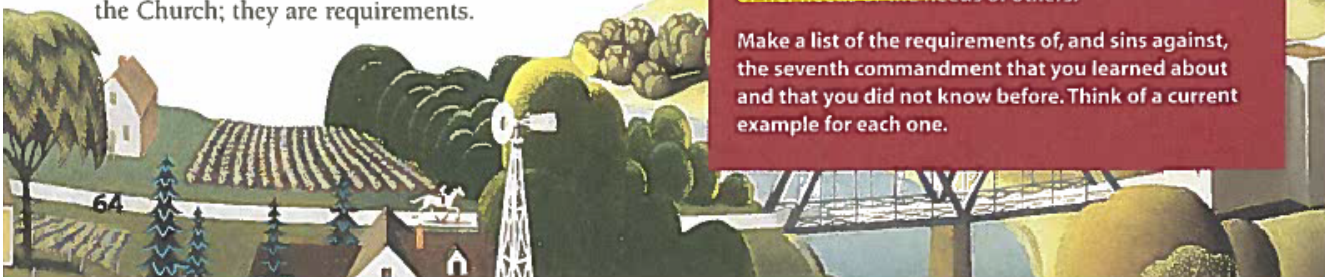
Justice for all

The seventh commandment not only commands us not to steal. It requires respect for human beings, their goods and possessions, and the created world. The good things of the world are gifts from God that belong to everyone. Individuals can own things as private property, but what we own, we own as **stewards, or caregivers**. The idea that the goods of creation are meant for the benefit of all people is called the "universal destination of created goods." True justice in society means making sure that all people have the goods they need to live, whether they have money or not. We must take care that the economy, or society's rules and structures for buying and selling, is organized and run in a way that ensures that human needs are met.

The seventh commandment also requires that contracts and promises be kept if they are morally just. It also requires that stolen goods, or their equivalent in money or goods, be returned. The seventh commandment also forbids the enslavement of human beings. It is against human dignity to buy and sell human beings like merchandise. Other offenses against the seventh commandment are: **deliberately keeping what is loaned to you, fraud in business, paying unjust wages, and "price gouging" (charging high prices to take advantage of another's ignorance or in times of hardship).**

Gambling or games of chance, though not immoral in themselves, are against the seventh commandment if they deprive someone of the means to provide for his or her needs or the needs of others.

Make a list of the requirements of, and sins against, the seventh commandment that you learned about and that you did not know before. Think of a current example for each one.





We live out the eighth commandment.

The Old Testament is full of accounts showing that God was faithful and true, keeping all of his promises to his people. And when God brought the Israelites to Mount Sinai, they, in turn, promised to be his people—to live out the commandments and to give witness to the truth of God's great love for them.

To give witness means to have personal knowledge of a person or event and to tell others the truth about it. The eighth commandment states, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Exodus 20:16). Giving false witness can harm others; often, it can harm the whole community. When false witness is given under oath it even threatens fair legal decisions. So, the eighth commandment teaches us about the need for the truth. Truth is the foundation of all positive human relationships. The eighth commandment obliges us:

- to witness to the truth of Jesus by the things we say and do
- to tell the truth
- to respect the privacy of others
- to honor the good names of others and avoid anything that would harm their reputations.

The eighth commandment forbids us to **lie**—to speak or act falsely with the intention of deceiving others. Some lies that hurt the good names of others are **rash judgment**, or assuming that something about another person is true while not having sufficient information to judge; **detraction**, or telling, without reason, someone's faults and failings to those who do not know them; **calumny**, or lying about someone, thus hurting that person's reputation and causing others to judge him or her falsely. **Boasting**,

or **bragging**, is also an offense against truth, as is **sarcasm** when it is used to make fun of people.

No matter what the reason, lying makes situations worse. Lying damages our own name, makes us lose respect for ourselves, and hurts other people. When we lie, we need to admit it, tell the truth, and try to make up for any harm our lie has caused. We also must make reparation for any words and actions against the dignity of another person.

The eighth commandment also teaches us about **keeping promises**. If we promise to keep a secret by giving our word to another person, that person trusts us. It is wrong to break that person's trust. There might be times, however, when we are asked to keep a secret about something that is harmful or dangerous to someone. In these cases we must tell people we trust and get help for the person in danger. Doing this is courageous and is also an act of

friendship. And though we must always tell the truth, we cannot set out to hurt someone's good name. Thus, we should avoid **gossip and rumors**—information that we hear but do not know to be true. And at certain times we should just keep the truth to ourselves, if sharing it would only hurt people's feelings and make them sad, or even sick, for no reason.

Once, when Jesus was teaching about the eighth commandment, he explained it very simply. He said, "Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No'" (Matthew 5:37). Jesus expects us, as his disciples, to follow his advice and keep our words and actions true.

Faith Word
lie

Activity Debate this popular saying: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." How does the eighth commandment enter into your debate?

BELIEVING...

We live out the ninth commandment.

Do you respect others and their relationships?

Throughout our lives we grow to understand how our human emotions, or feelings, affect the habits we form. The ways we express our feelings should guide us to act in loving and respectful ways, not ways that lead us to sin. **With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can overcome temptation, the attraction to choose sin.** With God's grace, we can form virtues, or good habits rather than vices, or bad habits that cloud our judgment of what is good and what is evil.

The ninth commandment is "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exodus 20:17). **To covet is to wrongly desire someone or something. When we desire, or want, something unreasonably, our thoughts and feelings can lead us to do things we should not do.** The ninth commandment obliges us to become more aware of the gift of human sexuality that God has given us and of the emotions,



feelings, desires, and even temptations that may go with it. This gift of human sexuality enables us to love others and to show them our affection. The sixth commandment teaches us the proper ways to show love and affection, calling us to respect and be in control of our bodies. **The ninth commandment calls us to protect even our desires—our feelings and intentions.** So, we must:


- keep our instincts and desires within the limits of what is good and honorable
- respect and protect the fidelity of the marriage commitment
- practice the cardinal virtue of **temperance**, which moderates the attraction of pleasures and helps us to bring our desires into balance
- trust in God's ways and value our human sexuality
- practice the virtue of **chastity** and the virtue of **modesty**, which means thinking, speaking, acting, and dressing in ways that show respect for ourselves and others
- try to know and follow God's will
- avoid thoughts and feelings that lead us away from following God's commandments
- pray, receive the sacraments, and keep our hearts focused on God.

In all these ways we are **pure of heart—living in the love of God, our Father, just as his Son, Jesus Christ, calls us to do, and allowing the Holy Spirit to fill us with goodness and love.**

Faith Words

temptation
covet
temperance
modesty
pure of heart

Activity With your group, plan a 30-second television ad promoting the ninth commandment.



Abstinence programs

As Catholics, we are all called to chastity. The Church teaches us that chastity "is a moral virtue. It is also a gift from God, a grace, a fruit of spiritual effort" (CCC, 2345). Our relationship with God can give us the strength to make the right choices regarding ourselves and our bodies.

Statistics on teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases can be alarming. Abstinence programs are one way that we can learn about the importance of living a chaste life. One Christian program, the Silver Ring Thing (SRT), features an abstinence program designed for Catholic schools and parish youth groups. SRT uses humor and technology to communicate the message of practicing abstinence. Being a part of SRT involves making a pledge to live a chaste life and wearing a silver ring as a sign of this pledge.

Discover ways SRT and other abstinence programs might help you live out the virtue of chastity.

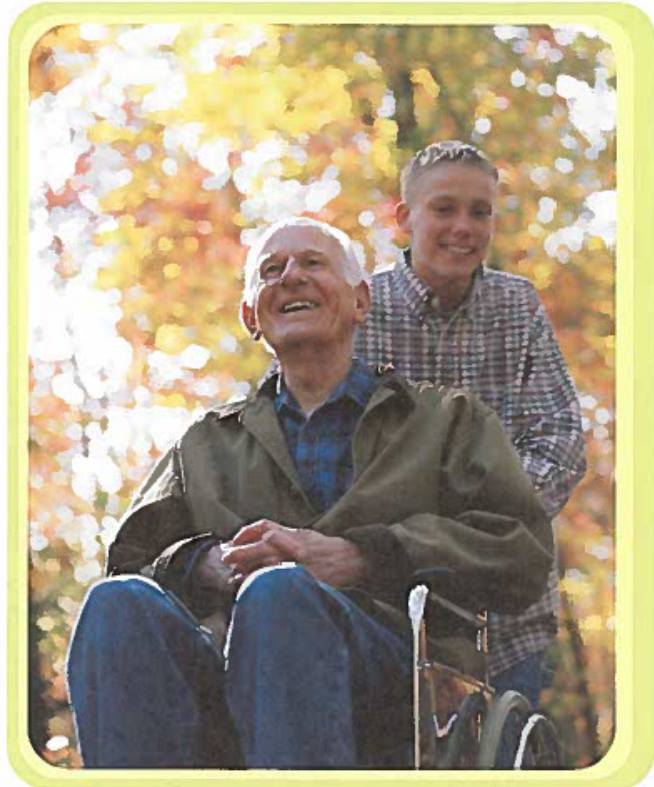
CATHOLIC IDENTITY

We live out the tenth commandment.

The tenth commandment, like the ninth commandment, teaches us to look into our hearts and to examine our thoughts and feelings, especially our feelings toward the possessions, qualities, and abilities of others. The tenth commandment also relates to the seventh commandment because it too deals with the property of others. In the tenth commandment—"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. . . . nor anything else that belongs to him" (Exodus 20:17)—we are reminded that we are obliged not to desire wrongly, or covet, the things that do not belong to us.

The tenth commandment obliges us to thank God for what we have, to work for what we need, and to help others to have what they need. We all need certain things to have a happy and healthy life, and God wants us to have those things. But we must not get caught up in wanting things unnecessarily. **Greed** is an excessive desire to have or own things. When people are greedy, they want more and more of something—money or clothing, for example. People can want things so much that they forget what is important in life. Jesus told us, "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions" (Luke 12:15).

In living out the tenth commandment, we trust in God, knowing that his love is more important than money or success. We work to live the way that Jesus taught us to live, knowing that true happiness comes from loving God, ourselves, and others. We restrain ourselves from being envious of others. **Envy** is a feeling of sadness when someone else has the things we want for ourselves. Envy can lead us to take what belongs to someone else. It makes us think mostly about ourselves and makes us unhappy about the success of others. When we are envious, we have a hard time seeing what we already have and being grateful for it.



When we rely on God and are grateful for the many gifts he has given us, we are able to think of others in a loving and giving way. Relying on God enables us to develop a generous heart.

The tenth commandment reminds us to become

poor in spirit, depending on God and making God more important than anyone or anything else in our life. We remember the things that are important: God and his love, people and their needs, the Church community in which we worship and grow in faith, and God's gifts of creation that we share with all people. These are the things that should fill our hearts.

“The ways we express our feelings should guide us to act in loving and respectful ways.”

Faith Words

greed
envy
poor in spirit

Activity How can you tell that someone is “poor in spirit”? How can you be “poor in spirit”?

RESPONDING...

Recognizing Our Faith

Recall the question at the beginning of this chapter: *Who is my neighbor?* What have you learned in this chapter that can help you to be more loving to your neighbor?

Living Our Faith

Think of a neighbor whom you will help today. Make a plan for helping him or her.

Thomas Merton



Partners in FAITH

Although he was not raised Catholic, Thomas Merton had a conversion experience as a young adult and became a member of the Catholic Church. He received bachelor's and master's degrees from Columbia University in New York and eventually taught at the university level, but he

desired to live a more spiritual life. He became a member of the Abbey of Gethsemani, a monastic community in Trappist, Kentucky. He lived as a monk in this community and often focused on the phrase inscribed on the monastery gate: *GOD ALONE*. Yet while living in the community, he wrote about a variety of subjects, including God's presence, prayer, social problems, Christian responsibilities, nuclear war, violence, and race relations. His writings expressed concern for his neighbors around the world.

Thomas Merton was a man who put his trust in God, as we can read in his autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*. He died on December 10, 1968, while attending a meeting of religious leaders in Thailand.

How can you, too, focus on God alone yet show love for your neighbors?



For additional ideas and activities, visit www.weliveourfaith.com.

Putting Faith to Work

Talk about what you have learned in this chapter:



We consider seriously the obligations of the seventh through tenth commandments and to apply them to our own lives.



We focus our hearts on God as we learn to love our neighbors as ourselves.



We share our love and our gifts with others generously.

Decide on ways to live out what you have learned.



ENCOUNTERING GOD'S WORD



“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. . . . Then the God of peace will be with you.”

(Philippians 4:8-9)

- ➔ **READ** the quotation from Scripture.
- ➔ **REFLECT** on these questions:
How might this advice help you to keep your heart pure and at peace? How can you remind yourself to turn your thoughts toward true, just, lovely, gracious, or excellent things?
- ➔ **SHARE** your reflections with a partner.
- ➔ **DECIDE** to turn your thoughts today toward truth and peace, and toward love of God and neighbor.

Complete the following.

1. A feeling of sadness when someone else has the things we want for ourselves is called envy
2. Being pure of heart is living in the love of _____
God, our Father, just as his Son, Jesus Christ, calls us to do and allowing the Holy Spirit to fill us with goodness.
3. Respecting the rights of others and giving them what is rightfully theirs is justice
4. The virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and helps us to bring our desires into balance is called temperance

Define.

5. poor in spirit depending on God and making God more important than anyone or anything else in our lives
6. temptation the attraction to choose sin
7. covet to wrongly desire something or someone
8. greed an excessive desire to have or own things

9-10. **ESSAY:** Name at least four ways to live out the seventh commandment. (p.64 green box)

- being God's stewards of creation - protecting the environment, recycling, not littering, etc.
- caring for the things that belong to us and respecting what belongs to others
- not taking things that are not ours, even things such as the answers to a test, some else's homework, or the ideas of others
- treating all people as valuable and important, no matter who they are
- appreciating human work as a participation in the work of creation
- showing respect for the goods and property of others and not damaging the property of others on purpose
- working to help all people, especially those who are poor and powerless
- giving alms as a work of justice
- making reparation, or amends, for injustices