



By Tom Hoopes

ISSUE: Churchgoing people know how to follow rules. We also know how to skirt them. We know exactly where the line is, and how to stay technically in-bounds, even while we indulge in exactly what that commandment forbids.

DISCUSSION: So here is a crash course on the Ten Commandments, focusing on the unique temptations we “religious” people have against them. Included are quotes from the *Catechism* and *Compendium of the Catechism*, because we are also the kind of people who want to know that this is “official” stuff.

Sixth commandment: Do we bond with our spouse through intimacy?

You shall not commit adultery. “In marriage the physical intimacy of the spouses becomes a sign and pledge of spiritual communion.”

We churchgoers are not immune to any of the usual ways of breaking any of the commandments, including this one. But even if we guard our relationships, our thoughts, and our entertainments, we still might fail on the positive side of this commandment. Do we appreciate and woo our spouse? Do we behave, dress, and speak in ways to encourage the bond of intimacy?

Remedy. There are many resources that can help jump-start your marital relationship. Look at the “Marriage & Relationships” section under the “Family” tab at CatholicDigest.com to get started.

Seventh commandment: Is our tithe up to date?

You shall not steal. “Christian life strives to order this world’s goods to God and to fraternal charity.”

Even those of us who would never dream of slipping a watch into our pocket and walking quickly out of a store can break the seventh commandment: The *Catechism* stresses that it is about what we give, not just what we take. How is our tithing? Maybe we used to give but then stopped during a time of financial hardship. Is the hardship past? Maybe our gift used to be generous, but we make more money now. Or maybe we have just never gotten around to fulfilling our good intention to give.

Remedy. Why not sign up for the automatic pay program with the parish today? Base it on current financial circumstances!

Eighth commandment: Are we Facebook braggarts?

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. “One should practice moderation and discipline in the use of the social communications media.”

Pope Benedict XVI addressed Facebook and Twitter in a very thorough way, though not by name, in the address he wrote for 2013’s World Communication Day. He said to be the same person online as we are in real life. He said not to share sensational, almost-true-but-not-quite

information. He said not to seek popularity, but to witness to the beauty of Christian life with a modest voice of reason and love.

Remedy: Boasting violates the eighth commandment. Our online activity should be about sharing with others, not looking to feed our ego with “likes.”

Ninth commandment: Do we see souls or just bodies?

You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife: “Purity of heart...enables us to see according to God, to accept others as ‘neighbors.’”

Purity of heart means seeing everyone’s real worth. C.S. Lewis once wrote that if we truly understood what people are, we would realize as we were talking to someone that 100 years from now they will either be so beautiful in heaven that we would be tempted to worship them, or so horrible in hell we would be tempted to flee them. How could we look at someone with lust or any other ulterior motive when so much is at stake in their life?

Remedy: Every “religious person” should have a bit of what Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa had: They would “look at you like you were the only person in the room.” When seeing others, we can pray, “Lord, help me love my neighbor as I love myself.”

Tenth commandment: Do others’ spiritual gifts make us sad?

You shall not covet your neighbor’s possessions. “Envy is sadness at the sight of another’s goods.”

Keeping up with the Joneses happens in church circles, too. We start out wanting to be holy, but soon want to be the holiest. So we hide the less holy things that happen in our lives and promote the good things. Do we only volunteer or give money only when we foresee that we will get public recognition for it? Do we keep the messiness of our life away from our church friends, even though we could get real help there? Worst of all: Are we sad when we see someone succeed in their religious life because they surpass us?

Remedy: We should pray specifically for those who inspire the most envy in us. Pray: “Lord, may others be holier than I, provided I become as holy as I should.”

“Lord, help me be like Mary and Joseph, who followed you both religiously and personally. You know I love you. Help me to love you more each day by following your commandments with honesty, passion, and joy.”

Catholic Digest: Tom Hoopes. “10 Ways Religious People Break the Commandments.” <http://www.catholicdigest.com/articles/faith/knowledge/2013/11-18/10-ways-religious-people-break-the-commandments>.