

*God's Plan
for Us:
Live His
Pattern*



Teaching the Way of Love

because humanity passes by way of the family . . .

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER, 2017

PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will intentionally live the Ten Commandments this school year.
- Parents will take extra time to pray with and for their children during this school year.
- All students will work to live in harmony with their classmates.
- Teachers will fill their classrooms with respect for human dignity.
- Parents will witness a visible love for God and for others in a way that their children will desire to replicate.
- Love and mercy will be abundantly shown within every family.
- No child (or parent) will ever feel they are beyond God's love and mercy.

Establish a Great School Year

Another school year is about to begin and families are quickly shifting gears from summer into school mode. In some ways, it is exciting to prepare for school (anticipating the new activities). But in other ways, going back to school is challenging (establishing earlier bedtimes and wake up routines). As the parent, you know how easy it is to become overwhelmed at this time of year.

Parenting websites have numerous suggestions for creating and managing order in your home as school starts. Ideas include resetting daily schedules a week in advance of the first school day, organizing workspaces in your house where homework will be done, and transferring the school calendar onto your personal calendar. These are all great ideas. But, my favorite one is **establishing a consistent pattern of expectations and rules** for the coming academic year.



Why should you take the time to intentionally set ground rules for your kids at the start of the school year? The answer is easy; you want your children to flourish during the next 10 months. You want them to enjoy school, advance their knowledge, get along with their classmates, and come home without anxiety or fear.

That is why you establish a consistent, unchanging pattern of instructions early in the academic year. Giving your children clear boundaries and rules makes your wishes known, explains the essential duties of each person and prepares everyone to live in harmony and calmness. A firm pattern helps everyone know what is expected and ensures the presence of a common good within the family.

Establishing a pattern of rules for your family is easy; following it is the difficult part. It is just a matter of time before someone tests your system and tries to disorder it with what we call a "behavioral event." When a behavioral event happens, you have to make a choice. Do you change the pattern or do you stay the course

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and take measures to teach and encourage adherence to the pattern? Our collective wisdom says that if you want to keep peace in your home, you will stick to your established pattern rather than give in to the behavioral event. So be ready to double down on your resolve to maintain the pattern rather than give in.

Have you ever considered that setting up a pattern of rules for your family is similar to God's commandments for us? Here are the parallels. God (like you) wants to bring a sense of order to life. Therefore, He (like you) established a consistent pattern of commands so that His will is known to us. God (like you) gives us commandments so that we flourish. God (like you) knows that it's difficult to follow the commands. Despite our challenges, He (like you) won't give in when you have a "behavioral event" (better known as a sin).

A well-designed pattern of rules like God's commandments set us up to do our very best. In fact, parents who truly want their children to flourish **build their family rules upon the Ten Commandments**. They weave their family pattern into the truth found in God's plan.

The ability to establish a pattern of rules for your family that are based on the Ten Commandments is so important that we—the authors of the Teaching the Way of Love program—are going to make the Decalogue our theme for the coming school year. Each of the coming Teaching the Way of Love newsletters will zero in on a commandment and present a practical way to live according to its wisdom within the family. We are thrilled to take on this mission for you. Keep reading to find out how you can establish a family pattern of rules that follow God's commandments.

Establish Your Pattern on His Commands

The first (and most important) step in establishing a family pattern of rules that follow God's commands is to know the Ten Commandments and consider how they apply to your family's current lifestyle. Are you ready? Here are the Ten Commandments with a reflection question for each that will help you do more than just read the rules.

1. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me. (*Who's first in your life? Is it God?*)
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. (*Is 'OMG' a phrase used in your home?*)
3. Remember to keep Holy the Lord's day. (*Do you work hard to gather as a family on Sunday?*)
4. Honor your father and your mother. (*Are your kids learning how to respect authority?*)
5. You shall not kill. (*How well do you respect each other in your home?*)
6. You shall not commit adultery. (*Are you teaching your family to respect God's plan for sexuality?*)
7. You shall not steal. (*Do you and your family respect the goods that others have? Do you value work?*)
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (*Does your family speak truthfully?*)
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. (*How concerned are you with purity in your family?*)
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods. (*Are you living a simple lifestyle that is unrestricted by material goods?*)

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**God's Plan
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VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2

Teaching the Way of Love

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OCTOBER, 2017

Faithfulness to God

PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will intentionally live the Ten Commandments this school year.
- Parents will take extra time to pray with and for their children during this school year.
- Families will work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will learn thankfulness for the blessings they have and avoid greed for the things they don't.
- Parents will witness a visible love for God and for others in a way that their children will desire to replicate.
- Love and mercy will be abundantly shown within every family.
- No child (or parent) will ever feel they are beyond God's love and mercy.

Parents want what's best for their children. And the desire to give our children the best goes beyond providing for our children's physical needs. As Catholic parents, we know that ultimately giving our children what is best means helping them to develop an intimate relationship with God and to learn how to acquire all of the goodness and love He wants us to have. This means we should teach are children about the 10 commandments which describe God's pattern of love for us.

What makes the commandments such a great place to start? Saint Pope John Paul II calls the 10 Commandments the *beginning* of love. Let's begin with the first commandment and see what it tells us about loving God and becoming the best we can be.

The first Commandment is, "I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods beside me."



For the Hebrew people who first received the 10 Commandments from God, this Commandment was very literal. They were pagans who believed there were multiple gods. Religion, to them, meant manipulating the gods in order to get what they wanted. God's first command was meant to teach the Hebrew people first that He was the only God, and second that He wanted them to love Him rather than use him to get something (BTW—this is what he wants from us as well.)

Modern Catholics may not struggle with worshipping more than one God. We understand that "the Lord is God, there is no other" (Deuteronomy 4:39). But, if we're not careful we can still treat God like the pagans did—using Him instead of loving Him. For example, we can ignore God until we need something

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or pray only when we want to ask God for something. Often our secular concerns—money, work, entertainment, our social life—push God out of the center of our lives. When God isn't at the center of our life, we aren't following the 1st Commandment. And when we miss the mark on this command, we are likely to do the same with the remaining nine.

What will it take to put God in the middle of everything we do? Develop your virtue. This means that you will form firm habits to do what is right and good. Virtues govern our actions so that we can follow God's commands and find joy in leading a morally good life.

Believe it or not, there are specific virtues that can be paired with each commandment. Which ones goes with the First Commandment? The first is the **virtue of fidelity** which is also called faithfulness. We practice fidelity when we make commitments to our relationship with God. Common commitments include daily prayer, frequent reception the Sacraments, reading Scripture and daily acts of sacrifice. Just as in marriage, daily small acts of commitment—especially acts of sacrifice—are clear signs that we mean what we say.

Spiritual childhood is another virtue that helps us to live the First Commandment. The first element of spiritual childhood is complete trust in God that leads us to give ourselves entirely to Him without reserve. The second element of spiritual childhood is humility and meekness—to not seek earthly power or gain for ourselves but instead to seek the good of others.

Encourage the Virtues of Fidelity & Spiritual Childhood

1. Read Bible stories about miracles to your children each day. Talk about the Glory of God.
2. Make a promise jar into which family members can write an action that they will do for God. Examples might include saying certain prayers, donating time or money to a charity, visiting a holy place, giving up media time...
3. Foster an "attitude of gratitude" among your children. Take time before bed to thank God for the blessings of the day.
4. Practice with your children saying, "God's will be done" when you're hoping for something good.
5. When you pray with your children, let them see your confidence in God and your assurance that your Heavenly Father hears you and wants what is best for you.

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VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

NOVEMBER, 2017

PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will challenge themselves to honor God's name.
- Parents will take extra time to pray with and for their children during this school year.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will cultivate a sense of awe and wonder for the greatness of God.
- Parents will witness a reverence for God and his creation in a way that their children will desire to replicate.
- Love and mercy will be abundantly shown within every family.
- No child (or parent) will ever feel they are beyond God's love and mercy.

No One Likes Name Calling

It is fair to say that public discourse – the way we talk to each other – has dropped to an all-time low. A quick check of most Twitter feeds, Facebook posts or trending YouTube videos will reveal multiple examples of foul language, cursing and the use of 'OMG'. What happened to the days when crude or rude speech – especially directed towards God's name - led to being corrected and admonished?

Demeaning and irreverent terms are so common today that most people don't even bat an eye when they hear them. We rarely take notice or react when they are uttered. It's as if we have become desensitized to the real meaning of these words or that we just don't think it's worth the effort to say something.



But, *we should say something and react* because blasphemous speech is a sin against God and His creation. It breaks the second commandment - **You Shall Not Take the Name of the Lord Your God in Vain.**

Why is it a sin to disrespect God's holy name? The name of God reveals His meaning to us. It conveys his reality; that he is all mighty, all loving, all trustworthy. He is the creator of everything that we are and have. The name of God deserves our highest honor and respect. That is why we say in the Our Father *hallowed be thy name*. (BTW, hallow means 'keep it holy'.)

Think about your own name for a moment and recall what it means to you. What's the origin of your name? Why did your parents choose it for you? What does it mean to them? Clearly, your name reflects who you are and it is likely that you are protective of it. You probably don't like people making fun of your name nor do you like others to use your name flippantly.

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God doesn't like His holy name misused either. He doesn't like us to utter words of hatred, criticism, or defiance against him to either ourselves or to others (this is called blasphemy). And, he doesn't want us to use vulgar language which is called cursing. Both defile his holiness and weaken our relationship with God.

The second commandment is also a reminder to us that we have an obligation to protect holiness in general. There are many people, places and things that have been touched by God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and deserve our respect. By example, consider Mary, the Mother of God, and all of the Saints; the Church (especially the tabernacle); Rosaries, bibles, relics, crucifixes... These are all holy and worthy of reverence. They reflect God and his goodness.

If you want to keep the second commandment, improve your reverence. Reverence is the ability to stand in awe of someone or something because you know it is more important, more beautiful, more wondrous in the universe than you are. Reverence for God means that we humble ourselves before him with wonder and amazement. Reverence helps us recognize that God is the reason for our existence; that he is the source of our life; that he is our salvation. He is above all things and worthy to be praised, adored, honored, respected, feared, and revered. He is the creator and we are the creature.

Let's take a look at some practical ways to become more reverent as a family.

Encouraging the Virtue of Reverence

1. **Make your home a no curse zone.** Talk as a family about the second commandment and what it really means. Discuss the importance of names and how disrespectful it is to use any name—especially God's name—in vain. Then, challenge your family to extinguish the use of cursing and other vulgar speech over the next 30 days. Check in on everyone's progress once a week.
2. **Say the Our Father as a family every day.** As you pray the Lord's prayer, slow down when you say "*hallowed by thy name*" and then pause briefly before resuming. Let the power of these words sink in.
3. **Experience the Sign of the Cross.** When you say the Sign of the Cross, become aware that you are praying *in the name* of God. It is so easy to rush through this and miss the meaning. Slow up and be more intentional.
4. **Try reverential silence.** Find times during the day to stop what you are doing and feel the holy presence of God. Just pause for 5-10 seconds and become mindful that God is with you. And, try a few minutes of reverential silence when you enter Church. Instead of checking out the congregation, kneel and close your eyes and sense the presence of God in your midst.
5. **Model reverential language.** Use the word "holy" to describe sacred things: "holy Mass, Holy Eucharist, Holy Rosary, etc. The Divine Praises is a great prayer to adopt as a family. You can find this beautiful prayer at www.ourcatholicprayers.com/divine-praises.html

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VOLUME 5, ISSUE 4

DECEMBER, 2017

**PLEASE PRAY
THAT**

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will honor the Holy Mass by going every Sunday.
- Families will find ways to make Sundays even more holy by celebrating at home.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will cultivate a childlike love for God.
- Parents will witness piety for God and for God's children in a way that their children will desire to replicate.
- God's Commandments and the demands of the faith will be seen as loving directions from God.
- No child (or parent) will ever feel they are beyond God's love and mercy.

Church & Chicken: Keeping the Lord's Day

One of the most important traditions in my family growing up was Sunday dinner. Our family would go to Mass, then sit around the kitchen and talk while the air filled with smells of baking chicken and winter squash. We'd then sit around the table for a formal family meal. My parents expected good manners and active conversation.

My parents also expected that the entire family would be together for Sunday dinner. Even when busy high school schedules sometimes meant we didn't eat supper together during the week, everyone would be at the table on Sunday. There were times I didn't appreciate that. Sometimes it meant missing a Sunday matinee at the movies or an afternoon out with friends.

But mostly, I didn't **want** to miss Sunday dinners. The food was good, but what I really didn't want to miss was the sense of family celebration we enjoyed during these meals. It wasn't until I was in college that I fully understood the magic of those Sundays. Only then did I realize that the meals and the Mass were connected, that our dinner continued the celebration we had started in the sanctuary. Sunday dinner was my parents' way of more fully keeping the **Third Commandment to keep the Lord's Day holy**. Going to Mass was a given requirement, and a privilege. But the entire day was reserved for God, family, celebration and rest.

The Third Commandment teaches us to remember our purpose in life. It's the Day of the Covenant, the day set aside to remember that we are created to love and to be loved, to be members of God's family.

God gave us the Third Commandment because He knows how easy it is for us to forget to stay centered on the meaning of life when our daily cares and concerns dominate our attention, focus and energy. He gave the Sabbath to the Hebrew people, not just as a day of rest, but as a day to remember the Covenant. It was a day for His chosen people to reconnect to God and to remember the purpose of their daily lives.

From Biblical times (see Acts 20:7), the Church replaced the Sabbath of the Old Law (the Seventh Day of Creation) with the Day of Resurrection (the first day of the week, but also referred to by the early Church as the "eighth day" - the day of new creation), so we can remember that we are members of the

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New Covenant under Jesus. Sunday is a day to reconnect to Jesus and to remember the great love the Holy Trinity has shown to us. For Christians and for Hebrews, the Lord's Day is a day to stop the day-to-day busyness and to take the opportunity to just **be** members of God's family.

God gave human families to us as a reflection of His greater family. Through our human families we should experience a love for each other that reflects God's love for us. So the Lord's Day is a time to focus on our family too. It's a time to be the Domestic Church and to join the celebration of the universal Church.

That's what my parents tried to teach us through the ritual of Sunday dinner. I'm grateful that they chose to make the Lord's Day a day of celebration and family togetherness.

What can you do to keep the Third Commandment on a deeper level as a family, to make it a day of celebration as members of God's Family and within your family? The best way is to encourage the **virtue of piety**. Piety means having a generous, childlike love for God. It means wanting to please God even if it means making sacrifices. Piety leads us to see God's Commandments and the demands of the faith as expressions of God's love for us. So it would mean approaching prayer and the Holy Mass as an act of joyful love rather than as a burden or a duty. Not only can this virtue help us to keep the Third Commandment, it can also help us keep it ever more deeply.

Encouraging the Virtue of Piety

1. **Pray for the Gift of Piety.** Piety is not only a virtue to be exercised, it's one of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. That means it's a specific grace that we can ask to be strengthened within us. Pray for yourself and for your family so this great Gift can become stronger. God will help you exercise the virtue!
2. **Attend the Holy Mass.** If you're not already going to Mass every week, make that your first priority. The Holy Mass is the source and summit of our faith. In other words, it feeds our entire spiritual life. Without the Holy Eucharist, your family can't nourish its faith.
3. **Do something special to celebrate.** Create a family ritual or tradition to help you bring the celebration of the Mass home (literally). It doesn't have to be a big dinner. Maybe you can make Sunday evening family game night. Maybe you go out for brunch after Mass. The point is to do something you can enjoy as a family, something that celebrates Jesus, the Resurrection and the Holy Eucharist.
4. **Keep Sunday holy even if you have to work.** Part of keeping the Lord's Day holy is to refrain from unnecessary work. We should make every effort not to make Sunday just another workday—at our jobs or at home. That said, the Church recognizes that some people **need** to work on Sundays. If you can't avoid working, find some other way to make the day a holy day of rest, such as taking time for extra prayer or Bible reading.
5. **Speak about the Holy Mass with reverence and excitement.** In last month's challenge we recommended referring to holy things using words like "holy" or "sacred." That's great advice here too. Talk about the Holy Mass and the Holy Eucharist. Perhaps more importantly, don't speak about going to Mass as a duty or a burden. Rather, say things like, "We get to go to Mass today! Is everyone ready?"
6. **Serve Others.** To love God is to love the things the Holy Trinity loves. That means loving His other children. Citing the example of Jesus, the Church doesn't consider loving service as labor to be avoided on Sundays. Find ways to show God's love to others through acts of loving service and kindness.

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*God's Plan
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VOLUME 5, ISSUE 5

Teaching the Way of Love

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JANUARY, 2018

PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will challenge themselves to do what is right for the sake of love.
- Parents will ask the Holy Spirit to help their family cultivate piety.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will cultivate a sense of awe and wonder for the greatness of God.
- Parents will do more than they think they should in order to witness sacrificial love to their children.
- Respect will be abundantly shown within every family.
- No child (or parent) will ever feel they are beyond God's love and mercy.

The Heart of the 4th Command; Do What's Asked for Love

You've been there, right? Your kids are not complying to a simple request that you've made. You don't want to yell or berate or lose your temper. So you do the countdown – *one, two, three...* You hope that counting will move your kids to get to business. If it works and they do meet your demand, it is likely that they do so with some resentment and a hardened heart. And that makes you sad.

Every parent knows that kids are supposed to obey their parents. After all, that is the 4th commandment; **honor thy mother and father**. But, this commandment goes way beyond doing what you are told. It's supposed to help each of us learn how to revere God and others.



Let's do a quick review. The 4th commandment opens the second part of the Decalogue which focuses on how to love one another as Christ does. (The first three commandments teach us how to love God.) It is the first of seven directives that outline how we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

This command introduces an understanding that true charity for others begins within the family. Most obviously, it is addressed to children. It directs them to honor their parents through respect, gratitude, obedience and assistance. But the commandment extends beyond the way a child treats his or her parents. It also covers interactions between siblings, extended family members, strangers and co-workers. And, it includes the way parents treat their offspring.

Because humanity passes by way of the family...

As you might expect, the Church has identified one virtue helps parents get to the heart of the 4th commandment. It is called piety. When developed, piety is expressed through reverence and obedience to legitimate authority. It changes a person's heart to see requests as opportunities to love another rather than as burdens.

Piety instills a desire within the heart to do what is right out of love rather than fear. When developed, kids choose to do what is pleasing rather than offensive. For example, piety moves a child to meet a request because it helps Mom and Dad out or because it contributes to the well-being of the family. Without piety, they just do what is asked of them without considering the other.

That's the grave obligation that we, as parents, have to the 4th commandment. We must concern ourselves more with shaping the hearts of our children than getting them to obey. We should focus on getting them to respond out of respect and assistance rather than out of fear or resentment. We want them to want to do what is right because it pleases us and God. When they get it, the ordinary moments of family life become more meaningful and unifying.

Here's a lovely quote from Pope Francis that pinpoints necessity for piety in our homes.

"The gift of piety makes us grow in our relation and communion with God and leads us to live as His children; at the same time, it helps us to pour this love also on others and to recognize them as (sisters and) brothers."

Let's fill our homes with deeper love by fulfilling the 4th commandment through the virtue of piety.

Encouraging the Virtue of Piety

You can teach your children to meet requests with love rather than resentment. Try these ideas.

- As the parent, do more than you think you should do. If you are asked to clean up the table after dinner, do that as well as sweep the floor. If you are asked to take out the trash, go the extra mile and place new liners in all of the waste containers you just emptied.
- Become mindful of how you make requests of others in your family. Instead of asking from a distance, go up to the person, look them in the eye and make your request.
- Become intentional about thanking someone who meets a request. Always show your gratitude when someone does what they are asked to do.
- As needed, impose fair consequences for requests that go unfinished. Always do so charitably, calmly and directly.
- Pray to the Holy Spirit asking that he will help your family acquire the virtue of piety and practice it on a daily basis.

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**God's Plan
for Us:
Respect for
human life.**



VOLUME 5, ISSUE 6

**Teaching
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FEBRUARY, 2018

**PLEASE PRAY
THAT**

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will challenge themselves to become gentle when challenged.
- Parents will ask the Holy Spirit to help their family cultivate meekness.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will cultivate a sense of awe and wonder for the greatness of God.
- Parents will do more than they think they should in order to witness sacrificial love to their children.
- The laws of our land will always respect the dignity of the unborn and the dying.
- No child (or parent) will ever find themselves beyond God's love and mercy.

The 5th Commandment; Do No Harm

Some commandments seem harder to follow; like keeping the Lord's Day holy or honoring your mother or father, or not lying. But there is one commandment that many people look at and say, "*I would NEVER do that one. There's NO WAY that I would ever kill someone.*" Thus, the 5th commandment – thou shalt not kill – is one that many people think they've mastered.

Not so fast. A deeper look at the 5th commandment reveals that it's not just about murder. It's about respect for human life from the moment of conception until natural death. Obeying this command involves fostering the physical, spiritual, emotional and social well-being of ourselves and others as well as avoiding intention homicide.



Think of the 5th commandment as the golden rule on steroids. God is eminently clear that we should treat ourselves and others just like He would. That means that we learn to control our anger, stop hatred and revenge, never impair our judgment with drugs or alcohol and on no account lead someone into temptation with our bad example.

Let's frame this in the positive. The 5th calls us to take reasonable care of our health and that of others, safeguard peace, uphold the dignity of human life, and support scientific advancement that refuses to exploit human life for personal gain.

Now do you think you have mastered the 5th? It's okay to admit that you need to work on this one. We all do. Why? Because we have a fallen nature which is a built in bias to move towards what is morally wrong rather than lean into what is morally right. Our fallen nature makes it very easy to justify flying off the handle when we face difficulty. It makes us think that we have a right to become aggressive and mean spirited.

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We should always oppose anger and resentment. A great way to do this is through the cultivation of meekness. Meekness gives us the ability to face adversity and remain in control. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, meekness makes a person self-possessed. It helps us choose God-like behavior rather than do harm.

Here's an example. Let's say that you come home after a frustrating day at work and find a message from one of your children's teachers. It informs you that your child is sitting an in-school suspension for cheating. You have a choice: explode or keep your cool. If you are meek, you will remain composed. The parent who maintains an unruffled edge in this situation is exhibiting super human strength and control using the virtue of meekness.

Before reading this newsletter you may have thought that meekness equals weakness; that it involves becoming timid. This is false. A parent who chooses serenity especially when they have reason to blow is exceptionally strong and in control. The greatest show of meekness is to know that you can take your child out, but choose not to. This is why Matthew 5:5 tells us that the meek are blessed and will inherit the earth.

Encouraging the Virtue of Meekness

Let's take a look at practical ways to restrain anger as a parent and take the higher path built upon meekness.

Stop. Think. Act. Train yourself to stop, then think and then act whenever you feel like you want to do harm (either to yourself or another).

Stop means that you might have to walk away, take a time out, learn to slowly inhale 3+ times... Do what it takes to stop and regain your senses. A father I know told me that when he feels his resentment growing, he goes to the kitchen, pours a large glass of water and slowly drinks it. By the time he finishes, he had regained his composure.

Think means that you need to assess what is really going on using meekness as your guide. Get to the bottom of the issue and then remind yourself that the best choice is to do no physical, emotional, or spiritual harm to anyone.

Act last. After you have assessed what happened and have reflected on how to manage the situation then act. It is helpful to know that, many times, the most godly actions are delayed.

Assess your own anger. If you find yourself losing your temper several times a week or even daily; if your anger is causing problems in your home with your spouse or children; if your anger leads to dysfunctional behaviors such as drinking too much, seek help. Do not let your anger lead you to harm yourself or others.

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Volume 5, Issue 7

March, 2018

Please Pray That

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will challenge themselves to respect others at all times.
- Parents will have the strength to lead their family in purity of heart.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will cultivate a sense of awe and wonder for the gifts of life and family.
- Our children will find support inside the family and out to practice self-control and balance.
- Chastity will become a respected virtue again within our culture.
- No child (or parent) will ever find themselves beyond God's love and mercy.

The 6th and 9th Commandments - Teaching Respect

As parents we want desperately for our children to understand and embrace God's loving plan for their lives, including God's plan for their bodies, as they grow into adulthood. In other words, we want our children and ourselves to learn how to honor the Sixth and the Ninth Commandments.

The Sixth Commandment: Do Not Commit Adultery - This Commandment calls us to see and honor marriage as a sacred covenantal bond. It calls us to deepen our love and respect for each other, for marriage and for family.

The Ninth Commandment: Do Not Covet Your Neighbor's Wife - This Commandment calls us to love selflessly and never use another person. It calls us to see the goodness in our own spouse and in our own family instead of selfishly chasing a more pleasing experience with someone else.

The challenge of teaching these commandments was brought home to me in the last school year when I received a phone call from the school principal about my son. Apparently he had been part of a group of boys who were drawing "inappropriate" cartoons about girls. The news caught my wife and me a bit by surprise, as our son had yet not expressed much curiosity about girls or sexuality.

Thankfully, we felt prepared by our Catholic Faith to address this tough issue.

A few days later, my son and I had "The Talk." First we talked about human dignity. I told him that God created every human being to be loved and respected ("Yeah, I know that, Dad."). Then I asked my son, "What are some ways we can show other people respect?" He came up with some really good ones. So I told him I was proud of him for knowing how to show respect to others.

Next we talked about the fact that God created men and women to be different, but in a way that helps them to support and build each other up. I gave him a few examples of how his mother's strengths made up for some of my weaknesses. Then I asked him how we as men can show women the respect that God wants us to. Grudgingly, he came up with one or two ways he could show respect to the "icky girls."



Finally, I asked him what kinds of things we should never do - things that show disrespect toward others, and especially toward women and girls. To my surprise, my son had very little trouble listing off some good answers. Then I brought up the drawings he and his friends had created, and I asked him if these were respectful or disrespectful. He got it.

This talk was extremely effective. The problem at school was never mentioned again, and my son started showing obvious signs of respect toward some of the girls in his class. But my wife and I knew that our job wasn't done. Teaching our children to respect others, to respect their own bodies, and to respect the gift of fertility - these are ongoing tasks. Having one "The Talk" just won't cut it in today's culture.

So we continue to strategize for how we can lead our children to grow in their observance of the 6th and 9th Commandments. There are two virtues that we need especially to invite our children to grow in.

Purity of Heart: In the Beatitudes, Jesus tells us "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Sometimes we too narrowly understand the virtue of purity as being clean from sexual sin or even as remaining a virgin. But then what happens when our children fall into sexual sin? Does losing one's virginity mean that one cannot be pure? In the Catholic moral and spiritual tradition, purity doesn't mean cleanliness. It actually means purity of focus. And what is our focus? Our focus is on God. So the pure in heart shall see God because God is the focus of their lives. This understanding draws our children much deeper into God's goodness. In their sexuality, in their dating lives, in their marriages their focus should always be to seek God's will rather than their own selfish desires. And if they mess up? What happens when we lose our focus? We ask for forgiveness and we work to get our focus back. Jesus always offers us redemption.

Chastity: The Cardinal Virtue of Temperance is the virtue of self-control that tends toward balance. Chastity is a virtue that falls under this "umbrella" virtue. It specifically speaks to practicing sexual self-control for the sake of using our sexual powers according to God's will and design. When we practice self-control we choose to become more fully human, rather than acting as animals and giving in to every desire. We also embrace the fullness of God's goodness (love, family life, God's mission of holiness), rather than settling for only part of the goodness God has to offer us (momentary physical pleasure). Chastity and temperance don't mean giving up God's goodness. They mean giving up our immediate desires in order to get **more** of God's goodness.

So how do we teach our children these virtues?

- Focus your family on God. Pray together. Develop a family spirituality. Talk about your faith at the dinner table. Talk frequently about what it means to seek God's will and to sacrifice selfish desires.
- Talk to your children early and often about what it means to respect others the way God calls us to. Give them examples, and ask them to give you example as well. Then find ways to practice that respect together.
- Find easier ways for your children to practice self-control. Virtue is like a muscle. It gets built up over time. Ask your children to cut video game time, to wait until supper rather than eating a snack, to give up a treat and to give money to the poor instead. If your children can strengthen the self-control muscle in small ways now, they'll be better prepared to handle sexual self-control in the face of temptation.
- Learn more about God's plan for human sexuality and teach it to your children when they're ready to hear it! Click on the "Parenting Through Puberty" link at twl4parents.com for resources to help you, including a mini-class on male and female fertility that is meant for parents of children entering puberty.

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Please Pray That

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will challenge themselves to respect others by respecting their property.
- Families will foster an attitude of gratitude and contentment to combat the materialism of our culture.
- Parents will have the strength to selfless generosity in a culture of selfishness.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will cultivate a sense of awe and wonder for the gifts of life and family.
- Our children will find support inside the family and out to practice self-control and balance.

Volume 5, Issue 8

April, 2018

The 7th Commandment - Justice & Human Dignity

When I tried to foresee what challenges my wife and I would face as parents, I never imagined that one of them would be stealing. To me, "Do not steal" was such a basic Commandment - sort of like "Do not kill." Only really bad people committed these sins - or people with major psychological disorders. But not my kids.

God has a great sense of humor.

It has happened at least 4-5 times. I found my son playing with a handheld video game that I knew he didn't own. My wife found an MP3 player hiding in his backpack. He showed off a cartridge for a game that a friend "gave him" but for which we don't have a console. Our son was stealing.

Our first thought as parents was, "What is wrong with our son?" After all, the 7th Commandment is so obvious! Our son isn't evil. He **must** be suffering psychologically. So we took him to a family therapist.

That's when our eyes were opened. We came to realize that our son's stealing wasn't as strange as we thought it was. Apparently the 7th Commandment **wasn't** so obvious to 8-year-old boys. After all, we live in a culture of instant gratification. Despite our best efforts as parents not to spoil our children, the very air our children breathe is an atmosphere of immediate gratification. Our children have learned that getting something is good, but getting something NOW is better. They have learned that the goal of life is to be entertained constantly. So why wouldn't they see taking what they want as a viable option in such an atmosphere?



Parents can no longer assume their children know that stealing is wrong. But instead of getting us down, parents can see this change in our culture as an opportunity to teach the deeper meaning of the 7th Commandment.

What are the deeper reasons we shouldn't steal?

1. Stealing not only disrespects someone's physical property, it also disrespects the labor and effort that went into obtaining the property.
2. To love means to "will the good of the other" (CCC 1766). To steal means to want what's good for yourself at the cost of others.
3. Stealing does not only injure individuals. It also injures society by destroying the bonds of trust between people, injuring safety and security, and forcing people to become more isolationist as they look out for themselves.
4. Stealing also destroys our personal character by making us untrustworthy. It has the same effects on us as lying.

So the 7th Commandment is about respect, love, the good of society, and the good of our own hearts.

How do we teach our children to live the deeper meaning of the 7th Commandment? A great place to start is with the virtue of justice. Justice is one of the four Cardinal Virtues. That means that helping our children develop this virtue will make it easier for them to develop other virtues that are related to Justice.

Justice is the virtue of giving to each person what is owed to him or her. This includes paying back debts, giving an honest day's pay for an honest day's work (and an honest day's work for an honest day's pay), and treating others fairly in business dealings. But it also means giving others the respect that is due to them just because they are human beings created in the image of God.

By emphasizing justice to our children, we can build in our children a respect for others that includes a healthy respect for property. We can teach them that people are more important than possessions, and more important than instant gratification.

So how do we teach our children the virtue of Justice?

- Teach your children the difference between fairness and equality. Just because other kids have possessions doesn't mean everyone has the right to those things, and it's not fair to take things from others.
- Encourage your children to show respect to others by using good manners.
- One great way to teach children the value of possessions is to talk about them in terms of the amount of work that goes into buying them. "This video game console costs \$300" may not mean much to a child. But "Mom would have to work 12 hours just to buy this game" shows them the connection between possessions and labor.
- Rather than buying your children things right away, show them the value of working and saving for the things they want.

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VOLUME 5, ISSUE 9

Teaching the Way of Love

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MAY, 2018

The 8th Commandment; Do Not Bear False Witness

PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will challenge themselves to live in truth.
- Parents will ask the Holy Spirit to help their family be honest in word and deed.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will cultivate a sense of awe and wonder for the truth of God.
- Parents will do more than they think they should in order to witness sacrificial love to their children.
- The media of our land will report what is true and limit fake news.
- No child (or parent) will ever find themselves beyond God's love and mercy.

I can remember it like it happened yesterday and not 40 years ago. My 10-year-old brother was hiding under a table in the basement. He had his hands over his ears and his eyes were squeezed shut. I climbed under the table with him, placing my hand on his knee. He lifted his head in my direction as I said...

*Just tell me the truth. Did you cut down the neighbors newly planted pine trees?
NO! Jimmy did it.*

But, Dad's ax was laying by the tree.

Jimmy came into our garage and stole it. It wasn't me. He wants me to get into trouble.

Just come clean. Tell me the truth. You know, Mom and Dad will be angrier at you if you lie.

With a bit more prodding (and the assurance that the consequences coming to him would be doled out without anger) he admitted to breaking the 8th commandment – **Thou shalt not bear false witness against your neighbor.**



Why do kids lie to us? (For that matter, why do we lie?) Here are the common reasons people choose to be dishonest: they don't want to disappoint; they want to impress; they are afraid; they don't want to get into trouble; they think they are in danger; they don't think they are lying.

Each of these reasons has a different motivator (e.g. self-preservation or fitting in or willful deception). No matter the motivation, parents need to address the lie because overlooking it is permission to continue fibbing or broadcasting 'fake news'. With intention, parents need to confront the sin of dishonesty because God creates us to live in the truth.

Because humanity passes by way of the family...

Lying has deep and destructive consequences. First and foremost, lying corrupts our child's heart and soul. It is like a cancer that continues to spread. It destroys trust within relationships and this creates anxiety in your child as she continuously covers her tracks. And, lying eats away at a child's self-esteem. She knows that she is a fraud and can easily believe that she is unworthy of trust or respect. Finally, if she wants to continue being dishonest, she has to surround herself with gullible people who are easily duped. This limits her exposure to trustworthy individuals.

The counter measure to lying is the promotion of the virtue of honesty. Honesty is the ability to witness to the truth. An honest person sees reality for what it is and refuses to fake the facts. He respects the reputation of others, is slow to judge, never misleads, boasts or gossips. An honest person gains the trust and respect of others. That is why the proverb says honesty is the best policy. Let's take a look at several behaviors that extinguish dishonesty and encourage truthfulness.

Encouraging the Virtue of Honesty

Here are a number of ways that you can encourage honesty in your children.

Learn how to remain calm when dealing with difficult situations—especially lying. Make sure that your body looks relaxed (no pursed lips, elevated shoulders, stern gaze, set jaw) rather than tense or aggravated. Your actions have to convince your child that you can deal with any situation without losing your temper. This makes you more approachable.

Never call your child a liar. Calling your child a liar hampers his ability to change into a truth telling, trustworthy person. If a child sees himself as a liar, he is more likely to be ashamed and hide the truth from you.

Figure out what motivates your child to lie. Respond accordingly. It is easier to end lying when you know the reason why it happens. A child who lies to avoid disappointment needs assurance that you will love them unconditionally. A child who lies to gain bragging rights with friends (guess what I got away with) needs consistent parental dialogue about trustworthiness rather than lectures. A child who lies out of fear needs a double dose of security that you will never cause them harm. Finally a child who lies out of ignorance needs his parents to show him the difference between reality and fantasy.

Recognize and appreciate their honest words and actions. When your child is honest and tells the truth, show gratitude and joy.

Give consequences when they deceive. A child learns that lying is harmful when he has to live through a negative consequence. Make sure that it matches the infraction. Make sure that you will see that it is carried out. Make sure that you give it with charity not anger.

Make the connection that trust builds relationship while lying alienates. Youth that lie will find it more difficult to have and maintain friendships.

Stay alert. Lying is very common amongst children and adults. That's why you need to stay alert to your child's actions and words. Watch for signs of deception. If you see something, address it out of concern.

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Please Pray That

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will always call to mind how they have been blessed by God.
- Families will foster an attitude of gratitude and contentment to combat the materialism of our culture.
- Parents will have the strength to selfless generosity in a culture of selfishness.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Our materialistic culture will learn through our example to value relationships and faith.
- Our children will find support inside the family and out to practice self-control and balance.

Volume 5, Issue 10

June, 2018

The 10th Commandment: Self-Control and Contentment

As parents, we want to give our children the very best. But God calls Catholic parents to really examine what it means to give our children the best.

My children will tell you that their friends get the best from their parents. Their friends have smartphones, video game systems, flat panel televisions, and the freedom to use this electronic entertainment as much as they want to. My wife and I always give the same response: "We don't give you those things because we want to give you the best." Of course, our kids don't understand.

My wife and I are addressing many concerns as parents. Free use of media can all too easily lead children to evils like pornography and other immorality because it is usually presented as fun, exciting and "normal." We are also fighting materialism. We want our children to find happiness in relationships and especially in the faith, not in entertainment.

Another thing we're concerned about is teaching our children the **10th Commandment: Do Not Covet Your Neighbor's Goods.**

This Commandment is often overlooked, partly because it seems to be taken care of by the 5th Commandment about stealing, and partly because we have only a vague idea of what "covet" really means. To covet means to want what is not yours. While the 5th Commandment most directly speaks to our actions and our respect for other people's property, the 10th Commandment speaks more directly to the heart. To covet means to wish that you had what belongs to your neighbor. The extreme version of covetousness is envy. Envy is sorrow over the good that happens to another. Covetousness says "I wish I had what he has." Envy says "I wish he didn't have that." The step from the first to the second is very small.

As we've discussed in every article of this series, we can teach our children not to covet their neighbors' goods by encouraging them to grow in virtues that lead us to the good God's intended by the commandment. The first virtue we can encourage in our children is **contentment**. Contentment means being at peace with what you have rather than focusing on what you don't have. The virtue of contentment is the virtue of controlling our desire for more. That's why getting everything we think we want does not lead to contentment. The more we get, the stronger our desire grows for more. That's why my wife and I made a conscious choice not to give our children every game, gadget or toy they fancy. Instead we try to find a few things they will truly value, enjoy and take care of.



Contentment is closely related virtue of **gratitude**. Gratitude is an awareness that the good things in our lives come as a gift, ultimately from God. Even when we “earn” things through the use of our talents and labor, we can recognize that even our talents and labor are gifts from God. When our children don’t learn gratitude their attitude becomes one of entitlement. They think they deserve anything they want. But when they learn gratitude, they truly appreciate what they are given. More importantly, they are more able to see the things they are given as signs of love, and therefore to focus more on relationships than on things.

Contentment and gratitude are both virtues that “hinge” off of the cardinal virtue of temperance. Temperance is the virtue of self-control that leads us to the balanced enjoyment of created goods. We don’t want to teach our children that having material possessions is evil. In fact, possessions and money can empower us to do a lot of good in the world. On the other hand, we don’t want to teach our children that material wealth and possessions are what will make us happy. We want to teach our children a balance that is expressed in virtues such as contentment and gratitude.

The virtue of temperance is exercised through self-control. As parents, we help our children exercise self-control by giving our children boundaries at first. Then we can offer them greater freedom as they show a willingness to exercise self-control. For example, we have made a deal with our son that he can have more freedom playing video games if he can show us that he is willing to use his time wisely (i.e. get his homework and his chores done) and be honest with us. We made a similar deal with our daughter, offering her more freedom reading ebooks as she shows us that she can exercise balance in other areas of her life.

These virtues are important because they train the hearts of our children to be less selfish. Being content with what they have, acknowledging in gratitude that these good things came to them through relationships (especially their relationship with God), and exercising self-control through temperance all helps our children focus on what is truly best for them. That, after all, is what we want for our children, right?

So how do we teach our children the virtues of contentment, gratitude and temperance?

- Exercise “Thanksgiving” on a regular basis. Ask every member of the family to say what they’re thankful for. Sunday after Mass is a great time to do this, since “Eucharist” is Greek for “Thanksgiving.”
- Intervene when you hear your children start talking too much about what they wish they had. Encourage them to consider something they are glad they have now instead.
- Serve others as a family. This is a great opportunity to help your children to recognize that others have less than they have. More importantly, it can help your children focus on love.
- Give your children boundaries designed to teach them self-control. This may include limited media time, designated times for dessert and treats (such as reserving dessert for holy days and special days of celebration), and putting fun in its proper place by balancing it with duties such as chores and homework.
- As your children mature, offer them opportunities to exercise freedom and responsibility and to earn freedom by exercising responsibility.

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