

## "Freedom from Theft"

Dear family,

Our Father gave us the Ten Commandments for a reason, a good reason. Few people will do it, but we all should look in the mirror and say, "MY Father gave me Ten Commandments because He knew very well I, myself, needed such COMMANDS - not suggestions - because otherwise I would tend to misbehave." After all, if we all were greatly inclined to holiness, we would not have needed those Ten in the first place. In fact - and again, few like to admit it - Our Father pretty much had us pegged as to the main areas we would sin.

So He gave us these Commands like stripes along the highway, to keep us within the boundaries of the narrow road to Heaven. To stray outside those boundaries - to disobey those Commandments - to SIN - well, welcome to the broad road to destruction. Sometimes there are immediate consequences, like running into the ditch of sin, hitting a tree and dying. Other times there are less immediate consequences. We might "get away" with doing something - or so we erroneously think. Like that secular hymn to Santa, Our Father actually does know when we've been bad or good so be good for goodness' sake.

Life itself tends to have consequences when we violate those Ten Commandments, when we sin. If we sin in smaller matters, maybe those consequences will be like straying over the "chatter-bumps" intended to alert us when we stray onto or over the highway stripes. Maybe we will get away with texting while driving most of the time. That's what makes it so dangerous. Without immediate consequences; we are lulled into a false sense of security, we are emboldened, until that day when our distracted driving actually does result in a real accident and we and others are maimed or killed. So it is with venial sins. The consequences are not immediate or are minor, so we are emboldened to continue and push the envelope further. That is such dangerous ground. Sin causes darkness in our souls, and the more we sin, the more it gets dark, dark, dark in there. It gets darker and darker until the time when we cross the line into grave sin and do not even recognize it for what it is. Then, dear family, we have definitely chosen to drive down the broad road to destruction.

Dear family, I say all this because too many people do not appreciate Commandment #7, thou shalt not steal. Other words for stealing include "Theft" and "Larceny." In the secular world, Theft is often defined as the unauthorized taking of property from another with the intent to permanently deprive them of it. Within this definition lie two key elements: a) a taking of someone else's property; and b) the requisite intent to deprive the victim of the property permanently ...

Understand this, dear family. Our Father had to COMMAND us not to steal precisely because we were inclined to steal. We were inclined to take that which was not ours. And the more we take, the more darkened are our souls to the reality and the gravity of the taking that which was not ours. Eventually, we get to the point of not even realizing the "taking." That is when we are blithely driving down the very center of the road to destruction ...

While I do not need to define taking of anything tangible, like a candy bar from Kwik Trip or a Wrangler from the Jeep dealership, the above example of the teachers stealing intangible time is instructive for another type of theft of which so many are clueless. For today, let us relate theft of

intangible time by relating Commandment #7, "Thou shalt not steal," to Commandment #3, Keep Holy the Lord's Day. The Commandment was a day. That means 24 hours. I sometimes say it this way, "God commanded us to keep holy the DAY. That means 24 hours. Commandment #3 does not say 'keep holy the Lord's 55 minutes and get mad if father's homily is a little long!' A day is a day, and a day has 24 hours. Remember that bit about how if we sin our soul gets darker until it gets really dark? All those people who cannot be bothered to show up for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Sunday - they commit grave sin because they have stolen God's time. Usually it does not happen all at once. Usually they start by playing fast and loose with just some of the 24 hours - doing unnecessary work, or making someone else do unnecessary work by shopping or eating out on Sunday. They start down that very slippery slope until one day - boom, they find any excuse good enough to blow off their Sunday OBLIGATION. That will not end well for them. If they do not want to be with God on Sunday, they will not be with Him in eternity. Period....

How about for today let us ponder how so many of us steal intangible things - like time - like God's time?

*As part of our next Confession - how about if we examine our consciences and ask ourselves how much time have we stolen. That is an important examination, dear family, because stealing time makes us thieves.*

*To help with that examination - let us ask ourselves if we have made it a point to do what Jesus told us to do. Let's spend an hour a day with our Lord.*

### **Prayer of Reparation**

My Lord and my God,

We have allowed the temptation of the devil to move our hearts toward theft.

Maybe our greatest theft is the theft of time, our stealing from the Lord what really is His time.

We are so immersed in temporal pleasures that we are blinded to our purpose in life, which is to know, love and serve God in this world so we can be with Him in the next.

Serving takes time, and so many are so stingy with their time.

We intentionally justify leaving God out of our daily lives because we have so many other priorities other than God.

So often we drive so far outside the God-defined narrow lines of life that we do not even recognize we are on the broad road to destruction.

We turn to You Lord, in our weakness, and beg Your forgiveness for our own theft of time - especially for the times we have not even kept Your day holy, all 24 hours of Your day.

We love you, Lord, and we beg for the wisdom and strength to love you more.

We know, Lord, if You will it, it will be done.

Trusting in You, we offer our prayer to You who live and reign forever and ever.

Amen.