



Formative Parenting

Cultivating Character in Children

A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania

LOVE OF GOD – COMMANDMENTS 1 – 2 – 3

On Mount Sinai God initiated a covenant with humankind. Moses pronounced the covenant to the assembly for all to hear. Nevertheless, the covenant was an expression of a **one-on-one** commitment – first of God’s love for us and then of our free-response in love. The covenant used the singular personal pronoun form of the word “you.” That means that God invited each of us into a personal relationship of love.

The “*Decalogue*” or “*ten words*” made known to us God’s will and clearly expressed what a free, love-response to God would look like! We call the “*two tables of the Testimony*” the Ten Commandments. Correctly understood, the commandments are not isolated rules and regulations; they are expressions of what love looks like. The living of the commandments is a personal response of human love to Divine Love that first loved us.

Throughout history the ordering of the Ten Commandments has changed. Currently, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* presents the organization that Saint Augustine taught: the first three commandments relate to love of God and the remaining seven commandments highlight love of neighbor. This newsletter presents **COMMANDMENTS 1-2-3** as formulas for expressing our love of God. The *Catechism* provides detailed instruction. This newsletter is but an appetizer!

First Commandment:

“I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange god’s before me.”

Deuteronomy 6:5 advised: “Love your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength.” God is faithful. God will keep the promises that God has made to us. God’s love will never end, nor be withheld from us. Some of the ways that we demonstrate our desire to make God number one in our lives include the following practices:

- In conversation and prayer acknowledge God as the supreme being: almighty, all-knowing, all-loving, all-merciful, and provident Father.
- Put God first and let everything else fall into place like power, popularity, prestige, wealth, comfort, etc.
- Cultivate a routine of morning and evening prayer.
- Depend on/trust the providential love of God to provide for your well-being rather than giving into despair, presumption, superstition or seeking knowledge of the future from other sources like astrology or palm reading.
- Thoughtfully pray the Acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity. These prayer-formulas can be found in Church missalettes, in the printed materials of Religious education programs, in devotional prayerbooks, and on various websites.

Second Commandment:

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.”

A name represents a person. Respectful use of it fosters growth in relationship and witnesses to others the importance of the person in our lives. For this reason:

- Speak respectfully God’s name and honor the things of God.
- Refrain from cursing or using God’s name in frivolous conversation or slang language.
- Hold as sacred the oaths and promises taken in the name of God.
- Recognize that false oaths, swearing, and perjury are an abuse of love because they ask God –who is Truth -- to witness to a lie.
- Avoid blasphemy – thought, word, or act that makes fun of or shows contempt or hatred for God, the Church, the saints, or sacred objects.
- Respect the names of other people as a sign of their dignity as children of God. Name-calling reduces a person to an object.

Third Commandment:

“Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day.”

Reserve Monday through Saturday for “business as usual.” Sunday replaces Sabbath for Catholic Christians, a day to recall *who you are and Whose you are!* Christian Sabbath is a celebration of Christ’s victory over death, therefore every Sunday is a “little Easter.” Sunday is a time set apart for parish worship via participation in Mass, the greatest prayer that the Church can offer. Within the liturgy we feed on the Word of God and on the body and blood of Jesus. Within community Christians give public witness to God’s goodness and to their relationship with God. Sunday continues as a day to rest from the labors of the week, to regroup, to assess, and to get energy and direction for the week ahead. Sabbath restores perspective and balance to our lives. God intends that Sabbath observance will nourish the soul and cultivate family, cultural and social life. For this reason the commandment requires us to avoid all unnecessary work.

Dr. Patricia McCormack, IHM, a former Catholic schoolteacher and catechist, is a formation education consultant, an author of several books as well as the PARENT PARTNERSHIP HANDBOOK feature of *Today’s Catholic Teacher*, and director of **IHM Formative Support for Parents and Teachers**, Arlington, VA. She speaks and writes frequently on topics of child formation. *Reach her at DrPatMcCormack@aol.com.*

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