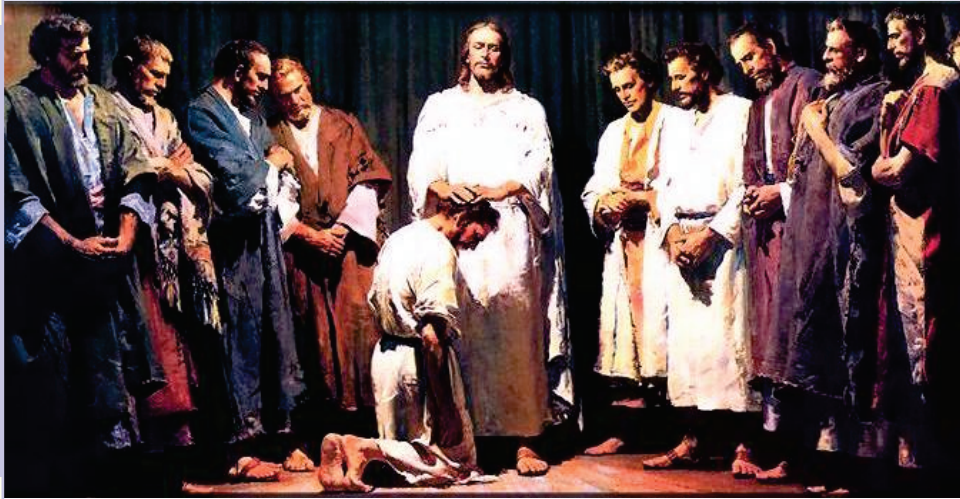


Lesson 13

THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH



God gave through Moses the Ten commandments for the people of the Old Testament. They are the Israelites. Their descendants were obliged to keep those commandments. The Catholic children of the Church in the New Testament also have the obligation to keep these commandments. All of us are members of the New Israel. The commandments received in the Old Testament were interpreted and completed by Jesus in the New Testament.

The Laws of the Church

The Commandments of God are for all. No one has the right to change them. But Jesus has given the authority to the Church to explain, interpret and teach them. We must pay attention to accept God's commandments and to abide by them in life according to the teaching of the Church.

Jesus gave his apostles the authority to teach and guide the disciples of Christ. The Church received this power through the apostles. **The Church teaches the faithful various means to attain salvation. The important means for salvation are the worship of God, reception of the Sacraments and obeying the commandments.** Along with that, the church gives us certain precepts for the growth and preservation of the ecclesial community.

The Precepts of the Church

The precepts of the Church are basically five. These precepts of the Church have evolved through the centuries. The members of the Church have the obligation to understand the purpose behind these commandments and obey them.

1. Participate in the Holy Mass on all Sundays and other days of obligation. Do not do works that hinder us from keeping these days holy.

This is connected with the third commandment of God. Holy Mass or Holy Qurbana is the supreme worship of God in the Church. Participating in Holy Mass and receiving Holy communion are blessed experiences in the life of a Christian. The power from the Holy Mass enables us lead a holy life. It is the obligation of the members of the Church to participate in the Holy Mass on Sundays. The Church instructs us to participate fully in the Holy Mass. It is always preferable to celebrate the Holy Mass in one's own parish Church. It is necessary for the growth and unity of the ecclesial community.

We should consider Sundays as an occasions to think and act with the Church. The Church instructs us not to do forbidden work those days, in order that we may find time to participate in the liturgy and do acts of Charity and mercy. This commandment requires of us to celebrate other obligatory days also like Sundays.

2. Receive the Sacrament of reconciliation at least once a year and receive Holy communion during the Pascal season.

Reception of Sacraments is essential in Christian life. The Church instructs us to receive the sacrament of reconciliation frequently or occasionally. The essence of this commandment is that, if that is not possible due to some reasons, they should receive this sacrament at least once in a year. The Church proposes the Pascal season for it. Pascal season means the duration from the beginning of the 50 days abstinence to the previous day of the feast of the Holy Trinity. The Church celebrates the commemoration of the Salvific mysteries during this season especially the Holy Week. Hence the Church teaches us to make this season as an occasion for annual confession.

3. Keep fast on the fixed days and avoid forbidden food during those days.

Fasting and abstinence are part of Christian life. The Church has fixed certain days and seasons for all its members to abide by these obligations. The faithful has the obligation to fast on those days. The Church instructs to abstain from meat on Fridays and during the Lenten Season. The Church also encourages us, the members of the Church, together with the abstinence from meat to abstain also from certain types of food and to do certain penitential acts along with it. It will strengthen Christian life.

4. Do not celebrate marriage on forbidden days or marry certain persons whom the Church has forbidden.

Advent and Lenten seasons are days of sacrifice. It is not an occasion for celebrations. Hence the Church does not allow the celebration of marriage or other celebrations during those days. Similarly, the Church insists that its members marry and get married only to a person who obeys the commandments of the Church. The members of the Church have no permission to marry or get married to such forbidden persons. This is the essence of this commandment.

5. Give the share and contributions fixed by the Bishops for the subsistence of the Churches and priests.

This commandment reminds us that it is the duty of the church community to protect the church and the poor and provide the necessary help to the subsistence of priests. The church is a place for the people of God to come together for the worship of God, especially the Holy Mass. It is the duty of the people of God to construct the Church, the place for the worship of God. They should also provide for the various needs of the church. The church is also a centre for the growth and welfare of the parish community. Hence, the faithful have the obligation to give the necessary financial help to the church.

Priests are serving the people of God. These are also other persons connected with the service of the church. The parishioners have the duty to provide for them also. Hence, the bishops fix the amount to be given to the church, the servants of the church and the poor on different occasions. That is called 1/10. The members of the church have the duty to give it at the right time.

The commandments of the church are not as unchangeable as the commandments of God. Based on place, time and culture, concessions are given in this. Only the Pope and the bishops have the right to do so.

The commandments of the church are meant more for the discipline and unity of the church rather than the spiritual growth of the members. We must receive them as good proposal/instructions that the mother church gives her children. When we obey them with docility and fidelity we become the children of God and sons and daughters of the church.

Let us Pray

O God! Help us to understand the spirit of the leaves of the church meant for our good and to live accordingly.

Read the Word of God and Narrate

Mt. 16: 13-20.

Word of God for our Guidance

“Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven,
and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”
(Mt. 16:19)

Let us Do

By heart the commandments of the Church.

My Resolution

I will obey the commandments of the Church and
thus be a faithful son/daughter of the Church.

Find out the Answer

1. What is the difference between God's commandments and the commandments of the church?
2. How many commandments of the Church are there? Which are they?
3. How are we to obey the commandments of the Church?
4. What is the meaning of the statement that we should not do forbidden work on Sundays and other obligatory days?
5. In what way do the commandments of the church help us?