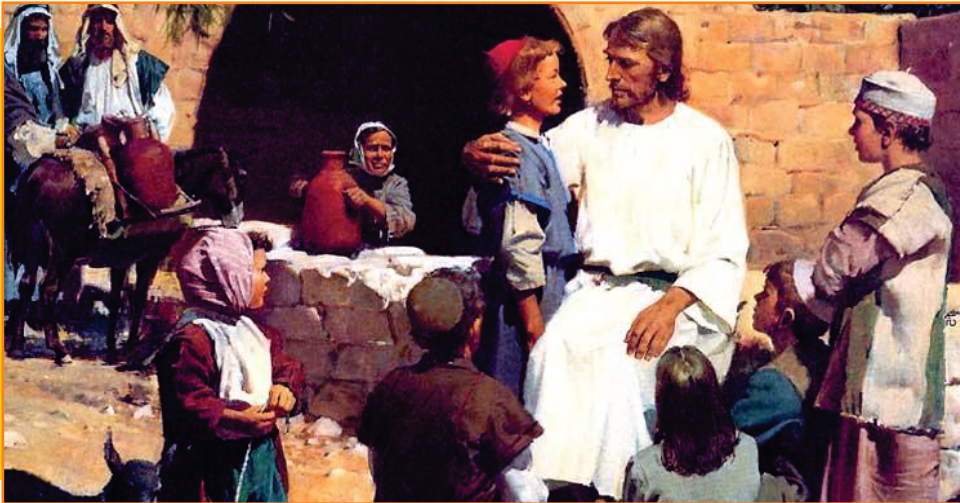


## Lesson 8

# DO NOT STEAL



“Anyone who was a thief must stop stealing. He should try to find some useful manual work instead and be able to do some good by helping others that are in need.” Thus St. Paul exhorts the faithful. Stealing is a grave sin among social evils. And because of that the commandment 'You shall not steal' is related to social justice. St. Paul says: “Thieves, the greedy drunkards, revilers, robbers none of these will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:10). This teaching of St. Paul emphasizes the importance of keeping this commandment.

### **Basic Reflections on the Seventh Commandment**

Wealth is God's gift. We read in the book of Genesis, the description of creation, that God creates the universe and all that is in it and gives them for the use of man. Wealth is meant for man's use (Gen 1:28). It is not to be amassed unjustly. It is also sinful not to share it and to use it in wrongful ways.

### **Public Wealth and Personal Wealth**

Man has the right to earn and enjoy riches and property in a just way. Wealth can be seen as personal wealth and public wealth. Public wealth is common to the society and everybody has the right to it. Personal wealth is that wealth which a person can make on his own and has the right to use. We have the right to own and enjoy created things in a just way. It is necessary for the progress of man and the welfare of the society. The right to own personal wealth persuades

men to work and bear fruits. Personal wealth assures a man's security and welfare. Stealing is taking the property of another person. This is an attack on the right to personal wealth. At the same time, unjust amassing of personal wealth and prodigality are also serious evils.

## **Idea of Justice**

“Justice is that virtue which persuades a person to give each one his due” Says St. Thomas Aquinas. “Only those who respect the rights of others can behave justly.” One's right becomes another's duty. Let us look at some examples (1) God as the Creator of the world is worthy of our adoration. It is our duty to adore Him. (2) One who works for us deserves wages. It is our duty to give him wages. (3) Parents have the right to be respected; it is the duty of children to respect them.

The basic principle of justice is to give what one owes to another. Jesus desires that the basis of our sense of justice should be love and fraternity. That is what we see in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The man who was attacked and plundered by the robbers, was in need of help and nursing. Presenting the Good Samaritan, who took up the responsibility of helping that wounded man, Jesus tells us: “Go and do likewise” (Lk. 10:37). To the unjust, Jesus will say on the day of the last judgment: Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers'. (Mt 7:23).

## **The Right to Wealth and Stealing**

The right of others to their own wealth is as important as our right to our own wealth. We have no authority to violate such rights of others. Such violation of rights is stealing. For example, the bus owner has the right to get ticket charge from the passengers. If we don't pay the ticket while traveling in the bus, it is a violation of his right; we have to think that, that money is being stolen from the bus owner.

## **Respect for Public Wealth**

Many things that we use in daily life are public wealth. Natural resources, government institutions, roads, street lights etc. are part of public property. Everyone has equal rights to these things. To own common property unjustly and use it carelessly or destroy it, since it violates the rights of many, are serious sins. The very fact that it is common property makes it a violation of the rights of the society.

## **Sins against the Seventh Commandment**

Using the common property carelessly or destroy it consciously or squandering them, exploiting natural resources, polluting the atmosphere etc. are disrespect towards public wealth. All these are, hence, violation of the seventh commandment.

Bribery, copying during the examination, usuring, black market, misuse of authority, showing partiality, denial of just wages to workers, etc. are social evils developing in our society. They are also violation of the seventh commandment.

### **Duty to Give Back the Stolen Goods**

If we steal something, we have the duty to give it back. If we have taken anything unjustly, we must return them and if we have caused loss to others unjustly, we must make amends for it.

Restitution must be made to the person who has suffered loss because of what we did. If circumstance do not allow us to do it publicly, it must be done privately. The commandment 'You shall not steal' teaches us that we have the responsibility to protect others' rights. Let us grow as protectors and guardians of social justice. Let us grow in goodness as the stewards of God's riches, using them for our good and the good of others.

### **Let us Pray**

God, who gave man authority over everything in this world, bless me to protect the rights of others and to respect them.

## **Read the Word of God and Narrate**

Luke. 10:30-37

## **Word of God for our Guidance**

“Thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers none of these Kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:10).

## **Let us Do**

Find out the sins that come under the seventh commandment and discuss how they can be atoned for?

## **My Resolution**

I will not misuse or destroy public property on any occasion.

## **Find out the Answer**

1. Wealth is God's gift. Explain?
2. What does St. Thomas Aquinas say about Justice?
3. What do we mean by stealing?
4. Write short notes on: Personal wealth, Public wealth?
5. How can a man who has stolen something make amends for it?