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## **Home Study Lesson 6**

### **Seventh and Eighth Commandments**

#### **GOAL**

The goal of this night is to help the teens understand the seventh and eighth commandment and to see these commandments' place in their lives. This lesson also discusses social media in terms of the 8th commandment.

**7th Commandment: "You shall not steal."**

**8th Commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."**

#### **TEACHING**

**Catechism of the Catholic Church**

**ARTICLE 7**

**THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT**

You shall not steal.

The seventh commandment forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of one's neighbor and wronging him in any way with respect to his goods. It commands justice and charity in the care of earthly goods and the fruits of men's labor. For the sake of the common good, it requires respect for the universal destination of goods and respect for the right to private property. Christian life strives to order this world's goods to God.

In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labor, and enjoy their fruits.<sup>187</sup> The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race. However, the earth is divided up among men to assure the security of their lives, endangered by poverty and threatened by violence. The appropriation of property is legitimate for guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of persons and for helping each of them to meet his basic needs and the needs of those in his charge. It should allow for a natural solidarity to develop between men.

The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefits to others, first of all his family.

In economic matters, respect for human dignity requires the practice of the virtue of *temperance*, so as to moderate attachment to this world's goods; the practice of the virtue of *justice*, to preserve our neighbor's rights and render him what is his due; and the practice of *solidarity*, in accordance with the golden rule.

### **Respect for the goods of others**

The seventh commandment forbids *theft*, that is, usurping another's property against the reasonable will of the owner. There is no theft if consent can be presumed or if refusal is contrary to reason and the universal destination of goods. This is the case in obvious and urgent necessity when the only way to provide for immediate, essential needs (food, shelter, clothing . . .) is to put at one's disposal and use the property of others.

Willfully damaging private or public property is contrary to the moral law and requires reparation.

### **Respect for the integrity of creation**

The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity. *Animals* are God's creatures. He surrounds them with his providential care. By their mere existence they bless him and give him glory. Thus men owe them

kindness. We should recall the gentleness with which saints like St. Francis of Assisi or St. Philip Neri treated animals.

God entrusted animals to the stewardship of those whom he created in his own image. Hence it is legitimate to use animals for food and clothing. They may be domesticated to help man in his work and leisure.

It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly. One can love animals; one should not direct to them the affection due only to persons.

### **The Eighth Commandment**

#### **DON'T BEAR FALSE WITNESS**

Since televisions were first sold, there's one kind of series that's always seemed to grab viewers: cop shows. The tension of watching a detective track down his suspect, put the pieces together, and book the bad guy is totally captivating.

And then there's the courtroom drama that soon follows. Experts are called in, lawyers make big speeches, and judges bang their gavels. But what really makes those courtroom scenes interesting is watching people get up on the witness stand. The testimony of each witness is what fills in the questions left in each episode's mystery...it's where the real tension happens.

When we think of witnesses, I'm sure a lot of us think of courtrooms and legal cases like those TV shows. But one of the Commandments – the Eighth Commandment – tells us that we should never bear false witness against each other.

We were made for the truth. Think about it: it's natural to say what's actually true, but it takes a real decision to invent and tell a lie. When Adam and Eve lied to God and turned on each other, they began the chain of our sinfulness that is dishonesty.

Lies tear at our ability to trust each other as a community and society. We are called, as Catholics, to seek and live the truth; not just the small truths of each day, but also the Truth of Jesus Christ.

## LIVING AND WITNESSING TRUTH

As we've seen this semester, the Commandments aren't simply big "no" signs telling us what to avoid; each one is a call to action for a virtue. This Eighth Commandment calls us to live a life of sincerity and honesty – things that the world might consider weaknesses.

Obviously, witnessing the truth means that we're going to avoid sins of dishonesty, and it means that we're meant to be the trustworthy people you think of when you think of holiness. Sometimes those situations aren't always about straight-up lies, either; cheating, exaggerating, and slandering (talking trash) are all examples of dishonest living. A lot of times, we don't tell all out black and white lies; we just blur the edges a little bit, pulling the black and white into a sort of gray. When we do that so we can lift ourselves up or put others down, we're leaving behind the virtue of honesty. Sucking up to people in charge, being over-flattering, or "forgetting" mistakes to make ourselves look better all put us ahead of the truth. That's not what we're called to as followers of the Truth.

Beyond avoiding those sins of dishonesty, there's another area in which witnessing to truth challenges us each day: actually witnessing. We aren't silent Christians; we have a reason for our hope. When our eyes, ears, and hearts are open, we can recognize the many ways God calls us to evangelize each day. Those moments can be some of the most challenging of our spiritual lives, but those same moments are also when we're called to live in truth and speak simply about who the Truth is.

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEDIA

One of the big ways we get information, whether true or not, is through the media. Those who gather and give information throughout the world have

the responsibility to make sure that information is truthful. While respecting proper authority and the rights of individuals, information is meant to be free – governments and journalists should not lie to people about what’s going on.

The Church stands against the idea of a totalitarian government that doesn’t give people the freedom of thought or information that they deserve. Even with our mistakes in the past, a theocracy – a country run by a religion – will never be the goal of the Church. Only in a free society, where people’s freedom to know the truth is allowed, is their free will actually respected.

Artists are also called to truth in the same way that newsmakers, storytellers, and politicians are. Truth, art, and beauty are all linked together – the solar system is beautiful in part because we know it actually works; we’re a part of it. God’s moments of artistic flair reflect He who is truth.

Sacred art – church art – is designed to literally reflect the stories and virtues of the Creator. It’s easy to see how that’s supposed to show truth. But in our other art – our music, film, books, shows, plays, whatever it is – we have to make sure that what we’re saying is something that’s true. Does that mean every play written has to have a happy ending? No. But the plays that seem to tap into our deepest being, the ones that have the most weight, are the ones that recognize truth.

And it’s not just people who create art and media that have to be on the lookout; it’s all of us who consume those things as well. The Catechism talks about the need for us to form our consciences and tastes for media to line up with God’s will.

What we consume affects us – it’s just like food: you are what you consume. When we feed ourselves a steady diet of media that says “money is happiness,” or “you’re not good enough,” eventually we’ll start to believe it. We should always be on the lookout for what our music, movies, books, and shows are really saying, so we can surround ourselves with things that lead us to Him.

There’s one more area where this commandment on truth teaches us a lesson for our daily lives, and it can hit pretty close to home: social media. For some reason, when we get behind a keyboard, the rules of society and morality start to melt a little bit. Maybe online we’re a little taller, fitter...older. But the Eighth Commandment tells us it’s a sin to be dishonest, whether in “real” life or online.

We have to be honest about who we are – and about who others are. It's tempting to slander people who annoy us or who we don't like online, because we can get away with a lot when we're anonymous. But those sins don't get erased just because they're digital. We have to live out our faith on and offline.

So if we are supposed to live lives of virtue online – being honest about ourselves, lifting others up, and refusing to join the culture of cut-downs – how do we keep ourselves from getting taken advantage of? A virtuous, true life online only works if we protect our own dignity. Some things should stay private, and some can be shared with our friends, but we have to be smart and secure about what we're sharing online. You can be an open book – just think about how many pages you want to write on. Challenge yourself to not only share yourself in your social media, but also the truth of the Gospel you believe in.

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM THE MESSAGE OF HIS  
HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI FOR THE 45TH WORLD  
COMMUNICATION DAY

Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age, July 5, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today the radical changes taking place in communications are guiding significant cultural and social developments. The new technologies are not only changing the way we communicate, but also communication itself, so much so that it could be said that we are living through a period of vast cultural transformation. This means of spreading information and knowledge is giving birth to a new way of learning and thinking, with unprecedented opportunities for establishing relationships and building fellowship.

Young people in particular are experiencing this change in communication, with all the anxieties, challenges, and creativity typical of those open with enthusiasm and curiosity to new experiences in life. Their ever greater involvement in the public digital forum, created by the so-called social networks, helps to establish new

forms of interpersonal relations, influences self-awareness and therefore inevitably poses questions not only of how to act properly, but also about the authenticity of one's own being. Entering cyberspace can be a sign of an authentic search for personal encounters with others, provided that attention is paid to avoiding dangers such as enclosing oneself in a sort of parallel existence, or excessive exposure to the virtual world. In the search for sharing, for "friends," there is the challenge to be authentic and faithful, and not give in to the illusion of constructing an artificial public profile for oneself.

The new technologies allow people to meet each other beyond the confines of space and of their own culture, creating in this way an entirely new world of potential friendships. This is a great opportunity, but it also requires greater attention to and awareness of possible risks. Who is my "neighbor" in this new world? Does the danger exist that we may be less present to those whom we encounter in our everyday life? Is there a risk of being more distracted because our attention is fragmented and absorbed in a world "other" than the one in which we live? Do we have time to reflect critically on our choices and to foster human relationships which are truly deep and lasting? It is important always to remember that virtual contact cannot and must not take the place of direct human contact with people at every level of our lives.

In the digital age too, everyone is confronted by the need for authenticity and reflection. Besides, the dynamic inherent in the social networks demonstrates that a person is always involved in what he or she communicates. When people exchange information, they are already sharing themselves, their view of the world, their hopes, their ideals. It follows that there exists a Christian way of being present in the digital world: this takes the form of a communication that is honest and open, responsible and respectful of others.

The truth of Christ is the full and authentic response to that human desire for relationship, communion, and meaning, which is reflected in the immense popularity of social networks. Believers who bear witness to their most profound convictions greatly help prevent the web from becoming an instrument which depersonalizes people, attempts to manipulate them emotionally or allows those

who are powerful to monopolize the opinions of others. It is precisely this uniquely human spiritual yearning which inspires our quest for truth and for communion and which impels us to communicate with integrity and honesty.

I invite young people above all to make good use of their presence in the digital world. I pray that God may grant communications workers the capacity always to carry out their work conscientiously and professionally. To all, I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing.

**Close with and Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be**

## QUESTIONS

1. The seventh commandment goes beyond instructing us to “not steal”. What are some of the other demands it makes of us?
2. What does the Catechism of the Catholic Church’s teaching on the seventh commandment say about animals?
3. About how many hours a day would you say you spend using some type of media?

4. How has the media influenced your view on certain events? (Give an example from current news.)

5. Why do you think the Church is so passionate about the use of media?

6. When using things like Facebook, do you represent yourself with truth and integrity? Or have you lied about who you are or participated in tearing others down?

7. What is one change you could make to use media to build up God's Kingdom?