

# Catholic Morality Learning Activities

## The Ten Commandments

Just as the Ten Commandments helped the Israelites live their covenant relationship with God, the Commandments are also a guide for us. They tell us the minimum that is required to love God and others. The first three commandments show us how to be faithful to God. The last seven show us how to treat other people with love.

### **1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.**

*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.*

*You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:2-6)*

The great purpose of life is friendship with God, which leads to eternal life.

- Place your faith in God alone.
- Worship, praise, and thank the Creator.
- Believe in, trust in, and love God.

### **2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**

*You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. (Exodus 20:7)*

What we say reflects who we are. We respect the Lord's name.

- Speak God's name with reverence or great respect.
- Don't curse.
- Never call on God to witness to a lie.

### **3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.**

*Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.*

*For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. (Exodus 20:8-11)*

On Sunday we remember Jesus' resurrection. We set aside this day as a day of rest.

- Participate in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist.
- Rest and avoid unnecessary work on Sunday.
- Spend time enjoying your family. Perform a work of service. Take part in parish activities.
- Do nothing that would prevent others from keeping the Lord's day holy.

#### **4. Honor your father and your mother.**

*Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. (Exodus 20:12)*

Parents should love and care for their children. Children should respect and obey their parents and other people with proper authority.

- Respect, honor, and obey parents, older family members, and all those who have proper authority.

#### **5. You shall not kill.**

*You shall not murder. (Exodus 20:13)*

We respect and protect God's gift of life.

- Respect and protect the lives of others and your own life.
- Show special care for unborn babies, people who are elderly, and those who are dying.

#### **6. You shall not commit adultery.**

*You shall not commit adultery. (Exodus 20:14)*

We honor family life. We are faithful to our marriage promises and God's gift of sexuality.

- Practice chastity—express God's gift of sexuality in the right way according to our state in life.
- Be faithful and loyal to friends and family.

#### **7. You shall not steal.**

*You shall not steal. (Exodus 20:15)*

We respect the property of others, promote justice, and take responsibility for shared resources.

- Respect the things that belong to others and the resources that all people depend on.
- Share what you have with those in need.
- Work for justice.

#### **8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (Exodus 20:16)*

We are honest and truthful. We do not brag about ourselves or make fun of others. We respect the truth and defend others' good name

- Be honest and truthful.
- Do not brag about yourself.
- Do not say untruthful or negative things about others.

#### **9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.**

*You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Exodus 20:17)*

We are not envious of other people's relationships. We dress and act in modest ways.

- Practice modesty in thoughts, words, dress, and actions.

#### **10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.**

*You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Exodus 20:17)*

We do not envy what others have. We are not greedy. We rejoice in others' good fortune and help them in hard times.

- Keep ourselves free of envy and overattachment to material goods.
- Do not be jealous of others' possessions.
- Do not be greedy.

(Sources: p. 40-41 and p. 144 *Walking by Faith Four: Christian Morality* and p. 61 *Call to Faith Book 4*)

# House of Values

**Foundation of the House:** Write down the (most important) moral values that guide how you live your life as an individual or family. What are the things you will not budge on?

**Walls of the House:** What are the kinds of things you do to strengthen and support the moral values in your foundation—people, activities?

**Windows of the House:** What are some of the specific ways you try to live your moral values?



# Beatitudes Litany

The Beatitudes are values that come straight from the mind of Christ. Beatitudes are a way of life designed for those who want to live their lives like Jesus. The Beatitudes invite us to take the risk of living as Jesus did. They tell us that God loves us and gives us the courage to live a Beatitude-life. The Beatitudes are found in Chapter Five of the Gospel of Matthew. Translated into simple language, Jesus could have said something like this.

- ❖ Blessed are those who are convinced of their basic dependency on God, whose lives are emptied of all that doesn't matter, those for whom the riches of this world just aren't that important.  
**Response:** The Reign of heaven is theirs.
- ❖ Blessed are those who know that all they are is a gift from God, and so they can be content with their greatness and their smallness, knowing themselves and being true to themselves.  
**Response:** For they shall have the earth for their heritage.
- ❖ Blessed are those who wear compassion like a garment, those who have learned how to find themselves by losing themselves in another's sorrow.  
**Response:** For they too shall receive comfort.
- ❖ Blessed are those who are hungry for goodness, those who never get enough of God and truth and righteousness.  
**Response:** For they shall be satisfied.
- ❖ Blessed are the merciful, those who remember how much has been forgiven them, and are able to extend this forgiveness into the lives of others.  
**Response:** For they too shall receive God's mercy.
- ❖ Blessed are those whose hearts are free and simple, those who have smashed all false images and are seeking honestly for truth.  
**Response:** For they shall see God.
- ❖ Blessed are the creators of peace, those who build roads that unite rather than walls that divide, those who bless the world with the healing power of their presence.  
**Response:** For they shall be called children of God.
- ❖ Blessed are those whose love has been tried, like gold, in the furnace and found to be precious, genuine, and lasting, those who have lived their belief out loud, no matter what the cost of pain.  
**Response:** For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB. *Seasons of Your Heart*. page 78)

# Beatitude Prayer

Here is a simple litany based on the Beatitudes as found in Matthew 5:1-10.

**Reader:**

"When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:"

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

**Response:** Help us to share our riches and treasures with others so that all may experience the kingdom of heaven.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Help us to have compassionate hearts for others have suffered and gone before us.

Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

**Response:** Help us to be gentle and considerate of one another, so that true peace can reign in our midst.

**Leader:**

Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

**Response:** In the spirit of fairness and generosity help us to challenge each other to seek justice in all walks of life.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

**Response:** Help us to be ever ready to forgive and slow to condemn those who harm us.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

**Response:** Help us to be pure in thought and action and to keep our eyes fixed on you.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

**Response:** In our families, our community, and throughout the world, help us to go beyond just keeping the peace, but to be *peacemakers*.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

**Response:** Help us to be willing to suffer for the sake of right rather than participate in unjust practices. Amen.

# Children's Examination of Conscience

1. Remember how much God loves you and how Jesus calls you to follow him.
2. Pray to the Holy Spirit.

*Holy Spirit, help me to understand how to follow Jesus each day, to know my sins—the times I have not followed Jesus, and be sorry for them with all my heart. Amen.*

3. Remember those times you have not followed Jesus. God is always ready to forgive us, if we ask. Think about the things you want to ask God to forgive in your life. Consider...

- + Did I talk to God today?
- + Did I say God's name with respect?
- + Did I go to Sunday Mass to praise God?
- + Did I respect and obey my parents?
- + Did I respect others as children of God?
- + Did I call someone a mean name?
- + Did I hurt someone's feelings?
- + Did I fight with anyone?
- + Did I steal?
- + Did I lie?
- + Did I try to bring God's love to others?
- + Did I share with my brothers, sisters or friends?
- + Did I help someone who needed me?
- + Was I friendly to people who are different from me?

Remember—we sin only when we do something on purpose or when we choose not to do the good things we are supposed to do.

4. Ask for God's forgiveness.

In your own words tell God you are sorry for your sins. You might also say this prayer:

*Dear God, I am sorry for doing wrong. I know you love me very much. Help me to be a caring person. Help me to change and grow in your love. Amen.*

Now your heart is ready. You can go with trust to meet the priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Together you will celebrate the love of God who always forgives us!

## Examine for Teens and Adults

*'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' He said to him, ' "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets' (Matthew 22:36-40).*

### Reflection Questions

- + Is my heart set on God, so that I really love God above all things and am faithful to God's commandments? Are the things of this world like money, prestige, or status truly secondary to my faith in God?
- + Am I continuing to grow in my relationship with Jesus Christ? Do I pray regularly and read the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, to learn how to be a more faithful disciple of Jesus? Am I growing in my understanding of my Catholic faith?
- + Do I worship God regularly by celebrating the Eucharist with an active and conscious participation? Do I celebrate the healing and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year?
- + Have I been loving and faithful in my relationships, especially with my spouse, family members, and significant relationships?
- + Do I live my life guided by Catholic values, such as respect for dignity of others, respect for creation and the environment, love, care and compassion, forgiveness, honesty, integrity? Which values have I neglected to live faithfully?
- + Do I take seriously the call to serve those in need, to alleviate suffering, to share my gifts, talents, and possessions with others? Do I work for justice for victims of oppression, discrimination, and poverty?
- + Am I ready to forgive and work for peace in my relationships and in my world?
- + Do I live my Catholic faith and moral principles in the workplace and in the community? Are my decisions in the workplace guided by Catholic moral principles?

### Prayer for Forgiveness

Forgiving God, we are sorry for the wrong choices we have made. We are sorry for the times that we have been lost from you. We know that you forgive us and that you rejoice when we come back to you. We thank you for the feeling of peace that comes from your forgiveness.

Help us to forgive others. Help us to share your peace with the people around us. Amen.

## Soften Our Hearts

Try this simple prayer to help you be more compassionate and forgiving.

**Leader:** When the ones I love get under my skin and rub me the wrong way . . .

**All:** Soften my heart, O, God.

**Leader:** When anger rises and resentments build inside of me . . .

**All:** Soften my heart, O, God.

**Leader:** When I have been a victim of another's selfishness, and it just isn't fair . . .

**All:** Soften my heart, O, God.

**Leader:** When I have been forgotten, left out, or left behind by those who matter,

**All:** Soften my heart, O, God.

**Leader:** (Your own intention)

**All:** Soften my heart, O, God.

**Leader:** (Your own intention)

**All:** Soften my heart, O, God.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment

The fifth commandment goes like this: "You shall not kill."

Try this simple exercise. Re-write the fifth commandment in your own words so that it reveals its full meaning to you. Also, write it in the first person, beginning with "I" rather than "you."

Here is an example: "I will show reverence and respect for all forms of life because I know that all life comes directly from God."

Share your re-written fifth commandment with others.

## It's Not Fair!

It is not easy to forgive one who has knowingly betrayed, abandoned, or deeply wounded us and not shown an ounce of sorrow. Have you experienced this sort of conflict? Perhaps you are dealing with just such a relationship now. If so, try these reflection steps:

### **Recall the encounter.**

What caused the conflict? What were the circumstances surrounding it? No interpretation at this point, just bring the salient facts to mind.

### **Name your feelings, then and now.**

How did you feel when the hurt occurred? What did you do with those feelings, e.g. talk to someone, pray about it, sulk, yell and scream? How do you feel about it now? Have your feelings changed since the event happened?

### **Carry it in a healthy way.**

Has this hurt taught you anything? If so, what? Learning is an indication of healing. Or is the hurt still raw and tender? If so, why do you suppose you haven't found some peace with it?

### **Pray about it.**

Ideally, reconciliation is a two-way street. Both parties recognize the hurt, one apologizes and the other forgives. But in this case the other isn't participating in the healing. Therefore, bring the hurt to God in prayer, and ask that you find peace in your heart.

## Spiritual Integrity

Truth is tied up with a person's integrity, and that integrity has a great deal to do with one's uprightness, honesty, and sincerity. Usually we think about these qualities in terms of our relationships with other persons. Take a moment, though, to think about your relationship with God, and the manner in which you nurture that relationship.

Do you remain open and honest with God?

Is your prayer forthcoming and real?

We tend to believe that God already knows everything about us, but nonetheless how often do we attempt to deceive God (and ourselves) with prayers and supplications that do not fully acknowledge our own shortcomings, or our own complicity leading to the current dilemma?

What must you do to be more honest in your relationship with God?

# Truth Subtleties

Depending upon how the word is used, “truth” takes on a variety of meanings. For example, can you sense the subtle difference between the phrase “to tell the truth,” and the phrase “to speak the truth”? How would you describe that difference? Perhaps you could say that one is a minimalist phrase: “to tell the truth.” For example, using the phrase in a sentence, one could say, “Peter was compelled to tell the truth when asked if he had completed his homework in time for today’s class.” The other phrase might be labeled prophetic. Using it in a sentence, one could say, “Archbishop Oscar Romero spoke the truth when he said, ‘Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all.’”

Working by yourself or with others, reflect on each “truth” phrase below. Use the phrase in a sentence to articulate its meaning.

**“Tell the truth”**

My sentence:

**“Speak the truth”**

My sentence:

**“Live the truth”**

My sentence:

**“Live in the truth”**

My sentence:

**“Person of truth”**

My sentence:

**“Walk the way of truth”**

My sentence:

**“Give witness to the truth”**

My sentence:

# Learn By Doing

A basic truth of the moral life is that we learn to love by loving. Make a short list of three people whom you choose to love today. Indicate how you will express your love.

Name	Loving Act
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

We learn virtue by doing virtuous acts. What is one selfless, virtuous act that you can perform today? How about one for tomorrow?

We learn courage by performing courageous acts. In what areas of your life do you need courage? A troubled relationship? A job or career concern? How would you pray about your need for courage? Formulate your prayer and share it with one other person who will support you.

# Special Blessing

Try this simple ritual when you want to acknowledge and celebrate an individual.

[name], you are created in God's image and likeness.

**Response:** Amen.

[name], you are a person gifted with human dignity.

**Response:** Amen.

[name], you are loved and supported by many.

**Response:** Amen.

[name], we count on you to model God's image and likeness in the way you live your life.

**Response:** Amen.

[name], we count on you to share your dignity with all those you meet.

**Response:** Amen.

[name], may your life from this day forward shine brightly with the love of God and our community.

**Response:** Amen.

# Living Together in Harmony

St. Benedict articulated four essential characteristics for monks to live together in community. He called for mutual respect, patience, obedience to one another, and love. These characteristics are essential for any group of people who live together.

Use the chart below to reflect on your relationships with the persons with whom you live. In the left column put the names of those with whom you live. Listed across the top are the four essential qualities. Complete the sentence stem for each quality in the box for each person. Be sure to fill in the bottom row of boxes which refers to your whole household.

	<b>Mutual Respect:</b> This person and I respect each other by	<b>Patience:</b> I can show patience with this person when	<b>Obedience:</b> I pledge my obedience to this person when	<b>Love:</b> I show how I love this person by
Name:				
Our whole household:				

## How Do You Spell R-E-S-P-E-C-T?

On your own, or with a partner, take a few moments to spell out what RESPECT means. Use each letter to begin a phrase or sentence that describes respect and dignity for others. See the example below.

R

E

S

P

Expect the best from those you meet, and they will deliver.

C

T

Now, use each letter below to start a phrase or sentence to explore the meaning of DIGNITY.

D

I

Give each person the benefit of the doubt.

N

I

T

Y

# Human Dignity Activity

Dignity recognizes that we must love and care for humanity as a whole *and* for individual persons. It is a recognition that the gifts each has been given are to be shared with others who may need those gifts. Very simply, it means recognizing the face of Christ in each and every person.

## Talk About Dignity

- What are some stories of human dignity? Share some experiences that show that all persons are valuable and loved.
- When do you find it difficult to see the dignity of others?

## Make A List

Create a list of things you believe about human dignity. "We believe that human dignity . . .

- challenges us to see God in others and ourselves.
- means seeing the opportunities around us to help others.

## Make Another List

Create a list of ways to practice dignity, such as . . .

- make regular visits to a nearby nursing home.
- giving away something meaningful to us that will surely help someone else.

## Talk About Jesus and Dignity

- What did Jesus teach us about human dignity?
- How do we practice Jesus' kind of dignity particularly among those with whom we live?

## In the Bible

Check out one or more of these Gospel passages on dignity.

- Jesus challenges us to give to others and to see him in the needy. Read Matthew 25:34-40.
- Jesus is aware of the needs of those around him. Read Mark 8:1-9.
- Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Read Luke 16:19-31
- Jesus tells what kind of treasures to store. Read Matthew 6:19-21.

## Closing Prayer

O God, created in your image and likeness, you have gifted us with profound dignity. We are truly grateful. Help us to see your face in all whom we meet. Amen.

# Teaching Catholic Morality Online Resources

Morality Activities – Saint Mary’s Press Resource Center

(Hundreds of individual activities, articles, videos, and presentations – available for free)

<https://www.smp.org/resourcecenter/subject/Morality/5>

Classroom Activities – Ave Maria Press

<https://resources.avemariapress.com/resources/>

Morality Activities – Loyola Press

Making Good Moral Decisions: <https://www.loyolapress.com/faith-formation/activities/making-good-moral-choices-role-plays/>

Catechist’s Journey

<https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/tag/morality/>

<https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/category/catechetical-issues-topics/ten-commandments-morality/page/3/>

Catechist.com

<https://www.catechist.com/?s=morality>

Ten Commandments - Catholic Mom (scroll down to “Ten Commandments” heading)

<https://www.catholicmom.com/resources>

Sadlier Publishing

<https://www.sadlier.com/religion/blog/topic/rel-topic-morality>

10 Commandments Activities: <https://www.sadlier.com/religion/blog/teaching-the-ten-commandments-to-youth>

The Ten Commandments – Archdiocese of Seattle Faith Formation Resources

<https://seattlearchmedia.weebly.com/ten-commandments.html>

Ten Commandments Activity – The Religion Teacher

<https://www.thereligionteacher.com/ten-commandments-activity/>