

# THE ROSARY

SEP. - OCT. 2015

Voice of the Rosary Confraternity

# LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER REGINALD MARTIN, O.P., DIRECTOR

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Dear Friends of the Rosary Center,

As I write this I am looking forward to celebrating the Feast of Our Lady's Assumption. However, we look ahead at the Rosary Center, so this issue of *Light and Life* will anticipate both the Feast of the Holy Rosary in October, and the Month of the Holy Souls in November.

Each day during November we will offer Mass for the happy repose of the souls of those close to you who have died, so please use the enclosed form to send us their names. Needless to say, we will remember your other intentions – and you – as well.

### A WORD ON STUDY

As you know, your gifts support the education of the young men who will be the next generation of preachers in the Western Dominican Province. In May I attended the Commencement exercises at our Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology (commonly called DSPT) and was altogether dazzled by the address delivered by one of our graduates, Br. Bradley Elliott. I've included a few paragraphs, to show you how well we've invested your contributions.

*I cannot be completely satisfied in this life. My mind cannot, in this life, find complete rest. Not yet. I cannot yet see Jesus Christ. I cannot yet see that single vision in which alone the mind will find perfect satisfaction. I cannot yet hold Him and embrace Him. I cannot yet hold and kiss His face; Not yet. No. Not on this side.*

*But what I can do on this side of the veil is study. I can study all that is true. I can, here and now, begin to recognize and distinguish, in the study of truth, what the features of that face will one day look like. I can, here and now, begin to appropriate to my soul, in the study of truth, a likeness of what that awesome presence might one day be like.*

*What a great gift to study philosophy and theology. What a privilege to be given the opportunity, the leisure, to study philosophy and theology.*



Silhouette by Sr. Jean Dorcy, O.P.

*This is why what we do here at the DSPT is so important. The DSPT assumes that the drive of the mind to ask ultimate questions, is not in vain; rather, it is at the heart of who we are as human persons. The DSPT assumes that faith and reason go together. And neither one must be checked at the door when I enter the classroom. The DSPT assumes that I am not the creator and master of my own reality as if from some self-enclosed sadness, but am rather the servant of a truth that reveals itself to all who humbly search – a truth in which we all live, move, and have our being – a truth that unites and binds us all. The DSPT has taught me that there is joy in being a servant of truth; joy in discovering it wherever it may be found; joy in learning it from another; and joy in passing onto another that which I have learned.*

Br. Brad's reflection caused me to do some serious thinking about study – not simply the reading we do to learn facts so we can pass a test, but the study that is the

*(continued on page 4)*

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Rosary Center

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TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

# THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

## The Ten Commandments: Part XI

### The Tenth Commandment

#### "Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbors Goods"

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

#### COMPLETING THE DECALOGUE

In our last reflection we observed the Ninth and Tenth Commandments sound so similar – “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife... Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s goods” – we may wonder what distinguishes them. Concupiscence, which our *Catechism* defines as “...any intense form of human desire,” (CCC, No. 2515) is the distinguishing characteristic, and our theology employs the term to describe the action of our sensitive appetite against our reason when we are faced with certain moral choices. Concupiscence is what St. Paul has in mind when he employs the image of the flesh rebelling against the spirit. We noted the Ninth Commandment is not urging us to embrace a moral austerity. St. Thomas Aquinas notes, “...none can live without some sensible and bodily pleasure.” (ST I-II, 34.1) What sets appropriate pleasures apart from those that are inappropriate is their alignment with reason. The example St. Thomas uses is the sexual act between men and women. It is praiseworthy when enjoyed by a married couple, but blameworthy when adulterous.

Our *Catechism* teaches the Tenth Commandment “unfolds and completes the ninth.” (CCC, No. 2534) The Ninth forbids unreasonable desires of the flesh; the Tenth forbids unreasonable desires for possessions, and governs the means by which we acquire them. Like the other commandments of the “Second Tablet” of the Decalogue, all of which govern our dealings with one another, the Tenth Commandment is rooted in Justice, and bears a particularly strong relation to the Fifth and Seventh Commandments, which forbid our unjustly depriving others of their goods, or using violence to obtain them.

#### AN AID TO CONTROL

As we make our way through life, we quickly discover our senses direct us to want the physical comforts we lack. The examples the *Catechism* uses are food when we are hungry, and warmth when we are cold. These desires are good because they promote our health and well-being. They work to our moral detriment when we want more than we need, or when we cultivate an unjust desire for what is not ours, or belongs, by right, to another.

#### TWO SINS: GREED AND AVARICE

Our theology names these moral flaws “greed” and avarice.” Greed, our *Catechism* teaches, is the desire

to amass created goods without limit. If we look at ourselves and consider what treasures we might like to pile up, we will probably have no difficulty discerning the ills that can arise from greed. Chief among them is the turning away from the world and its concerns to meditate solely upon the objects that have so captivated us.

Avarice is a passion for wealth and the power it can purchase. The Preacher in the Book of Ecclesiastes observes, “*money answers everything*,” (Eccles. 10.19) a cynical, yet apt, remark about the capacity of money to pave many of the roads we must travel. St. Thomas Aquinas identifies avarice (or covetousness) as one of the Capital sins, *i.e.*, a sin that gives rise to other sins. Among these are an insensibility to the needs of others, and the possibility of using violence or falsehood to obtain what belongs to someone else. Treachery, which motivated Judas, is another fruit of avarice. (ST II-II, 118. 1,3,7,8)

Before we continue, we should pause and recall that merely desiring money, or the good things it can purchase, is not sinful. Markets, which are the foundation of a Capitalist economy, assume individuals wish to acquire things that belong to others. This is probably not the first thought to cross our minds when we visit a grocery store, but the fact remains that our shopping expedition is an opportunity for an altogether moral exercise of our desire to lay claim to goods belonging to another.

#### BENIGN GREED

At the very beginning of *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith provides a philosophical context for our everyday commerce. He describes how trade, the fundamental force behind the market system we are so familiar with, operates.

*...man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favor, and show them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires... Whoever offers to another a bargain of any kind, proposes to do this. Give me that which I want, and you shall have that which you want...and it is in this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices we stand in need of. (Chap. II)*

Our *Catechism* offers a theological reflection that echoes Smith's words. "*It is not a violation of [the Tenth Commandment] to desire to obtain things that belong to one's neighbor, provided this is done by just means.*" (No. 2537) No one will be surprised to learn the key word here is "just." We reasonably read this sentence from the consumer's point of view, but another theological text warns merchants against the moral hazards of seeking to profit from unforeseen situations (e.g., drought or other weather conditions, which destroy or limit crop production) that threaten their competitors or drive up prices and, thus, pose unexpected hardship upon their customers.

## A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS

At Pentecost of this year our Holy Father, Pope Francis, issued an Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si*, which adds a spiritual voice to the present debate about environmental issues. Because many of these issues concern land ownership and the power arising from wealth, the Pontiff offered some remarks that contribute to our present reflection. At the beginning of the Letter he observed

*As the United States bishops have said, "greater attention must be given to "the needs of the poor, the weak, and the vulnerable, in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests." We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide.... (LS, 52)*

As he draws the Letter to its close, Pope Francis writes

*Today, in view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialog in the service of life, especially human life... Production is not always rational, and is usually tied to economic variables which assign to products a value that does not necessarily correspond to their real worth...it is the real economy which makes diversification and improvement in production possible, helps companies function well, and enables small and medium businesses to develop and create employment. (LS, 189)*

This may sound like a recipe for economic socialism, but it is nothing more than the rational appeal to the Common Good the Popes have been making in their social reflections for more than a century. A desire for gain moves markets, and markets have proven very efficient distributors of the world's wealth. But without some (however modest) controls to limit human greed, the Common Good can neither be guaranteed nor maintained.

## AN ADDITIONAL SIN: ENVY

A third sin condemned by the Tenth Commandment is envy. We may imagine envy to be nothing more than wishing we could possess the automobile, or enjoy a privilege, that we perceive makes the life of a friend more pleasant. In fact, envy is far more subtle, and more deadly. Our *Catechism* teaches us it is "*sadness at the*

*sight of another's goods, and the immoderate desire to acquire them for oneself, even unjustly.*" (CCC, No. 2538)

We may not be driven to take another's goods by violence, but we may nonetheless find aspects of envy alluring. St. Gregory the Great identified envy as the source of hatred, as well as pleasure taken at the misfortune of another, and public or private efforts to destroy someone else's reputation. Our *Catechism* observes, "*Envy often comes from pride; the baptized person should train himself to live in humility.*" (CCC, No. 2540)

## ENVY AND PRIDE

In his *Rule*, St. Augustine notes that every other sin takes pleasure in doing evil; pride, by contrast, takes inordinate pleasure in doing good. If we imagine ourselves paragons of some virtue, we might easily fall prey to envy when we see another manifesting a greater degree of that same good quality. Humility is the antidote to seeking vengeance, so it is an apt remedy against envy.

## THE SADNESS OF ENVY

What is pitiable in envy is the sadness that characterizes it. St. Thomas Aquinas contrasts envy with charity, and says the object of both is our neighbor's good. But while charity rejoices in the good things that happen to another, envy mourns them. (ST, II-II, 36.3) The latter is altogether opposed to our vocation as baptized Christians, called to love one another.

## EXTERNAL AIDS TO VIRTUE

We need only consult the earliest chapters of the Old Testament to learn what a sorry state we would find ourselves in were we left to our own devices. Fortunately, we have a loving God who looks out for us, and has, sent us two invaluable sources of assistance – "from outside." One is law, the other is grace. Each, our *Catechism* reminds us,

*...turns men's hearts away from avarice and envy. [Each] initiates them into desire for the Sovereign Good [and] instructs them in the desires of the Holy Spirit who satisfies man's heart. (CCC, 2541)*

The Ten Commandments, which have been the object of our study these past months, were God's great gift to His People in the desert, a reflection of His own goodness, and an invitation to be a sign to the world of His justice, mercy and love. The later chapters of the Old Testament reveal how our ancestors disregarded this gift – and the consequences they suffered.

So God took pity on us once again, and sent His Spirit to the Blessed Virgin. In the Incarnation we no longer perceive God through signs, but, in Jesus, find Him in one exactly like us. On the cross, Jesus offers God the one acceptable sacrifice – Himself – and the grace of our baptism allows us to share Christ's life, if we are willing to embrace the sacrifice of His death. Thus, St. Paul assures us, we "*are led by the Spirit and follow the desires of the Spirit.*" (Rom 8.14)

## THE VALUE OF POVERTY

We need pay only the slightest attention to the words of Jesus in the gospel accounts to discern that one of those desires is Our Savior's hope we will follow Him in the path of poverty. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," is the first of the Beatitudes, and only the most cynical reader will claim Jesus was praising nothing more than spiritual poverty. Jesus urges his disciples to imitate the birds of the air and the grass of the field. Neither studies economics nor owns anything, but God cares for them. How much more will He care for us, created in His image? These are but two examples from Jesus' preaching; over and over he commends those who give away their possessions, like Zacchaeus, and the widow, who contributes "all she has to live on," as he bemoans the lot of those like the rich young man who refuses to follow Jesus because "he had many goods."

## AN EXAMPLE FROM THE SAINTS

Throughout his Encyclical Letter, Pope Francis often invokes the example of his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, whose life of austerity is a magnificent and wholesome model of everything positive the Tenth Commandment urges us to incorporate in our lives. In the introduction to the Letter, the Holy Father calls St. Francis,

*...that attractive and compelling figure, whose name I took as my guide when I was elected Bishop of Rome...He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness.... He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace...if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled (LS, 11, 12)*

## TO WHAT END?

And if we follow the saints' example, and exercise the generosity Jesus urges, what have we to look forward to? Nothing less, our Catechism assures us, than the vision of God.

*Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. "In Scripture (writes St. Gregory of Nyssa) to see is to possess...Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive. (CCC, No. 2548)*

If we look around as we walk or – and this is quite frightening – drive down a street, how often do we see those with whom we share the space glued to an electronic communication device of some sort? What freedom have they sacrificed, and what have we captured by our not being thus connected? This is a small example, but it

illustrates what we give up when we devote our attention to the "getting and spending" the poet Wordsworth lamented two hundred years ago. To turn our backs entirely on the world's material concerns is a luxury granted very few, but to the extent we can train ourselves to limit our care for the commercial world, to that extent we can protect more of ourselves from the lure of greed and envy, and, perhaps, salvage additional time for God.

## THE EXAMPLE OF MARY

We are used to thinking of Mary as a model of poverty, but we may not have pictured her as the model of the virtues the Tenth Commandment calls us to embrace. However, if we look at the words of her *Magnificat*, we see her, in a very few – beautifully uttered words – turning her back on everything the Commandment condemns, and reminding us of everything praiseworthy the Commandment bids us remember and practice.

"He puts forth His arm in strength and scatters the proud-hearted." Mary has earlier praised God for looking on her in her humility; now we see the reward for her cultivating this attitude. Likewise, when she exclaims, "He casts the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly," she assures us that those who seek a place in God's Kingdom need not fear sharing it with those guilty of avarice, or who cultivate pride or envy.

"He fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich away empty." This verse is a splendid promise for the poor, of course, but it is also a promise of redress for all who have been victims of others' greed and avarice. Mary reminds us, God – always – remembers. ■

## WORD ON STUDY

*Continued from page 1*

defining characteristic of Dominican spirituality. Ultimately, study is a meditative enterprise, in which our reading and our prayer become one (or so it seems to me). Study is not something we carve out time for; it should be part of our way of life (or, once again, so it seems to me).

And that brings me to a book I just discovered, *Heaven Sent, My Life with the Rosary*. The author is Fr. Gabriel Harty, an elderly Irish Dominican. The volume proved simply breath-taking. Fr. Harty's reflections on the prayers of the Rosary are captivating, and his practical suggestions for employing the Rosary as a tool for meditation (and, perhaps, study) are unforgettable.

A word of warning: one chapter – it has nothing to do with theology or devotion – I found somewhat odd, and Fr. Harty is no fan of the Luminous Mysteries. He says he hopes to have a word with St. John Paul II when he encounters him in the Next World! Those minor quibbles notwithstanding, this book is utterly fascinating.

To obtain this book visit our web page at [www.rosary-center.org](http://www.rosary-center.org).

