

## **THE COMMANDMENTS.**

### ***The Seventh Commandment: Thou shalt not steal.***

**1.** By this Commandment we are forbidden (1) to take unjustly what belongs to another, (2) to retain it unjustly if it is in our possession, or (3) to cause him wrongful loss in any other way.

**2.** Those who *take unjustly* what is not theirs include thieves and robbers, dishonest domestic and other servants, fraudulent merchants and tradesmen, corrupt magistrates and judges, usurers and, speaking generally, every one who appropriates what is not his own against the owner's will.

**3.** Children who steal from their parents sin against this Commandment, because what they take does not belong to them.

**4.** It is of course always a sin to take unjustly what does not belong to you, but in any particular case the gravity of the sin will depend on the value of the thing taken.

**5.** Yet under certain circumstances even a mere petty theft may become a mortal sin, as, for instance, when the loss is a heavy one for the victim or when the theft is intended to be only one of a series involving a high value in the aggregate.

**6.** One is guilty of *unjustly retaining* property (1) if he receives stolen goods; (2) if having accidentally found something, he fails to use due diligence in restoring it to the owner; (3) if he interferes with the rightful succession to legacies; (4) if he misuses or fails to restore trust property in his keeping; (5) if he sweats his servants or keeps back their wages; or (6) if he evades paying his just debts; and so on.

**7.** We *cause wrongful loss to our neighbour* (1) if we injure or destroy anything belonging to him, or (2) if by unfair means we prevent him from earning his legitimate profits. We are equally guilty whether the loss is due exclusively and entirely to our own action or we are only accomplices or even mere accessories.

**8.** Read the advice St. John the Baptist gave to the crowds who came to confess to him the wrong they had done to others:

« For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire » . And the people asked him, saying, « What then shall we do? » And he answering, said to them, « He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do in like manner. »

« And the publicans also came to be baptized , and said to him: « Master, what shall we do? » But he said to them: « Do nothing more than that which is appointed you. » And the soldiers also asked him, saying: « And what shall we do? » And he said to them, « Do violence to no man, neither calumniate any man, and be content with your pay. »

« And as the people was of opinion, and all were thinking in their hearts of John, that he might perhaps be the Christ, John answered, saying unto all: « I indeed baptize you with water; but there shall come one mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and He will purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire. » (*Luke* III, 9-17.)

## **Explanation of the Plate.**

**9.** *In the small picture on the left* we see the elder Tobias, become blind and poor after having possessed great wealth and practised charity on a wide scale. His wife had to work to support him and their young son. Being one day presented with a kid, and hearing it bleat, he at once cried: « Take heed, lest perhaps it be stolen, restore ye it to its owners, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or touch anything that cometh by theft. » (*Tob.* II, 21.)

**10.** *The large picture* represents the death of Achab, king of Israel. Achab wanted to acquire by exchange a vineyards belonging to a Jezrahelite named Naboth, who however declined to part with his family inheritance. Acting under the advice of his wife Jezabel, a woman more wicked than himself, he had Naboth put to death on a false charge and then possessed himself of his vineyard. The prophet Elias went to Achab and delivered this message:

« Thus saith the Lord, in this place, wherein the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, they shall lick thy blood also. » (*I Kings*, XXI, 19) Later, being at war, Achab went to battle completely disguised so as to escape recognition, but a chance arrow struck him in the breast and he died. The blood that flowed from his wound was licked up by dogs, as Elias had predicted. (*Ibid.* XXII, 38.)

**11.** *The small picture on the right* shows Achan, an Israelite, who was condemned by Joshua to die a terrible death for having, against the divine command, appropriated after the capture of Jericho « a scarlet garment exceedingly good, and two hundred sicles of silver and a golden rule of fifty sicles. » He was stoned to death and all his property was set on fire and destroyed. (*Jos.* VII, 10-25.)

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