

## Precepts of the Church

How many Catholics today could recite the Ten Commandments? Could you? How about the Two Great Commandments? And how about the "Precepts of the Church"? Ever heard of them? Here is what you will find on the Precepts of the Church in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church, sections 2041 -2043*:

**2041** "The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by the liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor.

**2042** "The first precept ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor") requires the faithful to sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord as well as the principle liturgical feasts honoring the mysteries of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints; in the first place, by participating in the Eucharistic celebration, in which the Christian community is gathered, and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such sanctification of these days.

"The second precept ("You shall confess your sins at least once a year" .) ensures preparation for the Eucharist by the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, which continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness.

"The third precept ("You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season") guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of Christian liturgy.

**2043** "The fourth precept ("You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church") ensures the times of asceticism and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart.

"The fifth precept ("You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church") means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability."

Some will remember a sixth precept (now incorporated in the Marriage section of the Catechism), that is, to marry in compliance with the law of the Church.

Notice (section 2041) that these precepts are "meant to guarantee to the faithful the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor." (*emphasis added*)

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