

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Ninth Commandment: You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbor's Wife

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave . . .

(Exodus 20:17)

Insight

How modest or immodest is the current culture, given the content of all forms of contemporary media and commercial advertisements?

Tom went to the health club every morning to work out. If he didn't go, he felt bad the rest of the day. Working out helped him stay fit and deal with the stress of family and work.

It also didn't hurt that there were attractive women who also worked out at the same time he did. Tom enjoyed looking. One morning he almost fell off the treadmill doing just that. His attention wandered as his mind set off in a different direction.

Other than embarrassing himself because of his all-too-obvious reason for almost falling off the treadmill, Tom didn't see any real harm in his actions. He always had a very active imagination. Besides, nothing really came of it. It all stayed inside his head.

For Reflection . . .

Purity of heart necessitates the cultivation of the virtue of modesty.

How do you strive, concretely, to maintain a healthy level of modesty in your thoughts and behaviors?

Have you ever been the target of someone's lust? How did you feel about that?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2514–2533

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 439–446

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 527–530

Church Teaching

Knowing Ourselves

The human person is composed both of body and spirit. These two aspects of personhood are not in competition with one another. They are meant by God to be integrated into a holistic self. Our bodies are as much a gift to us from God as are our spirits.

However, due to the lingering effects of Original Sin, there sometimes arises the struggle between tendencies of spirit and flesh. This does *not* imply that we are to despise our bodies but that we must cultivate self-mastery and balance. The realization that on occasion the flesh rebels against the spirit (see Galatians 5:16 and Ephesians 2:3) underscores, first of all, the need for discernment of our true intentions, and secondly, the need to constantly strive to strengthen and cultivate personal virtues while combating or minimizing our vices.

Purity of Heart

The core of our moral being resides in our “heart” (see Matthew 15:19). It is the place where intentions form. The Ninth Commandment forbids us to desire another person as an object to fulfill our carnal desire.

The struggle to obey this Commandment requires purification of the heart. Jesus upholds the pure of heart (see Matthew 5:8). Those with pure hearts, promises Jesus, will see God face to face and be like him.

To attain purity of heart, we must see others as God does, accepting them as neighbors, not objects. We appreciate others and their bodies not as tools for our pleasure but as persons, reflecting divine beauty and deserving our respect.