

Doctrinal Session

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

You shall not covet your neighbor's house . . . or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Exodus 20:17)

Insight

How often do you purchase the newest product on the market? What motivates your buying and acquiring things?

The newest electronic gadget was going on sale tomorrow, and Carrie couldn't wait. It made her feel so modern and so connected. She, in fact, had a whole array of electronics. Carrie felt in command of her world with these devices and couldn't conceive of being without them. In fact, a large part of her day was spent using one or another of these products. Sometimes she used them to access important information and at other moments they were used to occupy time.

Now a slick new product was being released. It was a bit pricey and Carrie wasn't sure how it would improve her life, but she knew everybody at the office would be impressed by her acquisition. She couldn't stop thinking about the sensation this would cause among her coworkers and how envious they would be of her.

For Reflection . . .

Jesus invites his disciples to renounce their possessions for his sake and for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

What positive effect does (or would) detachment from the things of this world have on your life and your relationships?

What is your usual motivation when purchasing new things?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2534–2557

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 449–456

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 531–533

Church Teaching

A Disordered Desire

The Tenth Commandment forbids coveting the goods lawfully possessed by another. It also forbids avarice and greed. Evil acts have their root in the human heart. People engage in stealing, for example, because they first covet what does not belong to them.

Envy

The Tenth Commandment also warns against and forbids the acting out of envy, which can poison our relations with others. Envy of another's possession of things can drive us to use unjust means in order to acquire them for ourselves.

We may also envy the particular talents, achievements, or social standing of others. From envy flows hatred, detraction, gossip, delight in the misfortune of a neighbor, and displeasure caused by a neighbor's prosperity.

Ultimately, envy is a refusal of the virtue of love. To fight against envy requires good will, humility, and trust in God's providence. In humility, we rejoice in our neighbor's progress and merits, giving glory to God and thus praise to the One from whom all good gifts come.

True Wealth

True Christian wealth consists in embracing Jesus as Lord and brother. He embodies Good News and prompts us to renounce the allure of worldly goods in favor of kingdom priorities. Enriched by our inclusion in Christ's Body, the Church, disciples keep their eyes firmly fixed on the heavenly kingdom, which is the true inheritance of the saints in glory.