

My Catholic Morals! Study Group

Session 7 - Stealing and Coveting

Pre-meeting Prep

Participants should be asked to read Chapter Seven of the *My Catholic Morals!* book prior to this meeting.

5 minutes - Gather

Snacks and informal social time as people arrive. Try to be punctual and gather everyone together no longer than 5 minutes after the scheduled starting time.

5-10 minutes - Opening prayer and Scripture

Everyone sits quietly as the leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and then invites a period of silence in the following way:

Let us quiet ourselves as we begin this study of our glorious Catholic morals together. "Lord, as we sit here for a minute in silence, help each one of us to bring our own questions, concerns, fears, and joys to You. Help us, in this moment of silence to be attentive to Your gentle voice speaking to us, directing us, and calling us to a deeper faith."

Take about a minute in silence with eyes closed so that each person can speak to our Lord about their own particular cares and concerns.

Leader reads the following invitation:

Let us ponder the Word of God. Let us reflect upon our own faith journey with the following questions: Do I believe? How deep is my faith? Am I open to letting God speak to me? Am I open to the Word of God and willing to let God's truth sink in more deeply? Am I willing to let this new faith change my life?

The leader of the session prayerfully reads the following Scriptures, one at a time, pausing for about 30 seconds between each verse:

Genesis 3:17-19: To the man he said: Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, You shall not eat from it, Cursed is the ground because of you! In toil you shall eat its yield all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bear for you, and you shall eat the grass of the field. By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, Until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Exodus 20:15: You shall not steal.

Exodus 20:17: You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female slave, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Matthew 6:21: For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

Matthew 5:3: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 5:8: Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Leader then says: ***Let us take a moment in silence to reflect upon these words.*** (a minute of silence)

The Leader invites everyone to listen prayerfully as the leader prays the following prayer aloud:

Dear Lord, we thank You for the abundant blessings You have bestowed upon us. We thank You first for the spiritual gifts You have given us, especially the gift of faith we have in You and the gift of charity You have given us to share with others.

Thank You also, dear Lord, for the many material blessings You have bestowed upon us. Help us to always use what You have given to us for Your glory and for the good of others.

Give us the grace, dear Lord, to always trust in Your providential care.

Amen.

The prayer time concludes with everyone professing the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

45-50 minutes - Discussion questions

Each person should be invited to share something or ask a question if he/she chooses regarding the questions/discussion starters below. Go through one question at a time, and give each person an opportunity to say something if he/she chooses. Avoid having one or two persons dominate the discussion. Go around the circle and do not be afraid to share! Your insights might assist someone else in their understanding of the topics. Your question might very well be the same question someone else has. Some of the questions below will invite a personal sharing; other questions will invite you to share with others what you read in Chapter One. The goal is to share personally and to make sure that the faith of our Church is clearly expressed and understood by all.

1. Discuss the difference between seeing all of creation, all of the material world, as belonging to God and His entrusting it to us as its stewards vs. the absolute ownership of private possessions.
2. Discuss the following aspects of the 7th Commandment:
 1. Theft: When is it wrong to take something, and when is taking another's possessions permissible?
 2. Selfishness: Share ways that selfishness is a temptation in our day and age. What are practical manifestations of this sin?
 3. Natural Resources and animals: What is our duty toward the natural world, and how does God want us to use it properly? What are abuses and what are appropriate uses?
3. Discuss the business world, capitalism, and other economic systems. What are the dangers in certain economic systems that fail to have as the central focus the dignity of the person? What is the ideal focus in economic systems? Discuss the difference between focusing on money vs. the dignity of the person.
4. Discuss the responsibility we share in caring for the poor. First focus upon those locally who are in poverty. What responsibility do we all share in caring for them, and what are appropriate responses to poverty? Discuss, also, global responsibility between nations.
5. The 10th Commandment moves from the material world to the interior desires. Briefly discuss the connection between the 7th and 10th Commandments.
6. There is an adage that says, "He who has money, never has money enough." Similarly, Ecclesiastes 5:9 states "The covetous are never satisfied with money, nor lovers of wealth with their gain; so this too is vanity." Discuss what this means.
7. The 10th Commandment focuses especially upon our desire for more "stuff." What is wrong with this desire? Is it wrong to want more? Discuss carefully, looking especially at the ultimate object of our desire.
8. The Beatitudes call us to poverty of spirit and purity of heart. Discuss how the Beatitudes draw us deeply into this Commandment, purifying our desires and helping us to have God as our single focus.

20 minutes - Final Reflections and sharing

Go around and give each person an opportunity to share what might have stood out the most to them from the discussion of the night or what left them the most confused, so as to gain further clarity or insight from others.

5 minutes - Closing prayer:

Leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and invites a minute of silence with all eyes closed. Each person should reflect upon what was discussed in this session, especially what stood out to him/her the most.

Leader then prays the following prayer:

Dear Lord, I want to love You with all my heart. Help me to increase that longing and to seek You above all things.

Please purify my desires and help me to remain singly focused on You, the source of all true wealth.

Help me, dear Lord, to always have a heart of compassion for those who are in need and to care for them as You direct.

I choose to live poverty of spirit and purity of heart. May I see the great value of these Beatitudes and embrace them in my life.

Jesus, I trust in You.”

Leader then invites everyone present to offer their own prayer in the following way (Note: This can be done out loud, but it might be preferable if it's done in silence at the discretion of the leader):

Let us now each bring our own personal concerns before our Lord, trusting that He hears us and knows all we need. Let us entrust these prayers to Him with full confidence that He desires to take control.

(Take a minute of silence for each person to speak to God about their own personal needs.

Leader then invites everyone to close with the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.