

# From the Second to the Fourth Commandment

**Q. 1217. What is the second Commandment?**

A. The second Commandment is: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

**Q. 1218. What do you mean by taking God's name in vain?**

A. By taking God's name in vain I mean taking it without reverence, as in cursing or using in a light and careless manner, as in exclamation.

**Q. 1219. What are we commanded by the second Commandment?**

A. We are commanded by the second Commandment to speak with reverence of God and of the saints, and of all holy things, and to keep our lawful oaths and vows.

**Q. 1220. Is it sinful to use the words of Holy Scripture in a bad or worldly sense?**

A. It is sinful to use the words of Holy Scripture in a bad or worldly sense, to joke in them or ridicule their sacred meaning, or in general to give them any meaning but the one we believe God has intended them to convey.

**Q. 1221. What is an oath?**

A. An oath is the calling upon God to witness the truth of what we say.

**Q. 1222. How is an oath usually taken?**

A. An oath is usually taken by laying the hand on the Bible or by lifting the hand towards heaven as a sign that we call God to witness that what we are saying is under oath and to the best of our knowledge really true.

**Q. 1223. What is perjury?**

A. Perjury is the sin one commits who knowingly takes a false oath; that is, swears to the truth of what he knows to be false. Perjury is a crime against the law of our country and a mortal sin before God.

**Q. 1224. Who have the right to make us take an oath?**

A. All persons to whom the law of our country has given such authority have the right to make us take an oath. They are chiefly judges, magistrates and public officials, whose duty it is to enforce the laws. In religious matters bishops and others to whom authority is given have also the right to make us take an oath.

**Q. 1225. When may we take an oath?**

A. We may take an oath when it is ordered by lawful authority or required for God's honor or for our own or our neighbor's good.

**Q. 1226. When may an oath be required for God's honor or for our own or our neighbor's good?**

A. An oath may be required for God's honor or for our own or our neighbor's good when we are called upon to defend our religion against false charges; or to protect our own or our neighbor's property or good name; or when we are required to give testimony that will enable the lawful authorities to discover the guilt or innocence of a person accused.

**Q. 1227. Is it ever allowed to promise under oath, in secret societies or elsewhere, to obey another in whatever good or evil he commands?**

A. It is never allowed to promise under oath, in secret societies or elsewhere, to obey another in whatever good or evil he commands, for by such an oath we would declare ourselves ready and willing to commit sin, if ordered to do so, while God commands us to avoid even the danger of sinning. Hence the Church forbids us to join any society in which such oaths are taken by its members.

**Q. 1228. What societies in general are we forbidden to join?**

A. In general we are forbidden to join:

1. All societies condemned by the Church;
2. All societies of which the object is unlawful and the means used sinful;
3. Societies in which the rights and freedom of our conscience are violated by rash or dangerous oaths;
4. Societies in which any false religious ceremony or form of worship is used.

**Q. 1229. Are trades unions and benefit societies forbidden?**

A. Trades unions and benefit societies are not in themselves forbidden because they have lawful ends, which they can secure by lawful means. The Church encourages every society that lawfully aids its members spiritually or temporally, and censures or disowns every society that uses sinful or unlawful means to secure even a good end; for the Church can never permit anyone to do evil that good may come of it.

**Q. 1230. Is it lawful to vow or promise strict obedience to a religious superior?**

A. It is lawful to vow or promise strict obedience to a religious superior, because such superior can exact obedience only in things that have the sanction of God or of His Church.

**Q. 1231. What is necessary to make an oath lawful?**

A. To make an oath lawful it is necessary that what we swear to be true, and that there be a sufficient cause for taking an oath.

**Q. 1232. What is a vow?**

A. A vow is a deliberate promise made to God to do something that is pleasing to Him.

**Q. 1233. Which are the vows most frequently made?**

A. The vows most frequently made are the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, taken by persons living in religious communities or consecrated to God. Persons living in the world are sometimes permitted to make such vows privately, but this should never be done without the advice and consent of their confessor.

**Q. 1234. What do the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience require?**

A. The vows of poverty, chastity and obedience require that those who make them shall not possess or keep any property or goods for themselves alone; that they shall not marry or be guilty of any immodest acts, and that they shall strictly obey their lawful superiors.

**Q. 1235. Has it always been a custom with pious Christians to make vows and promises to God?**

A. It has always been a custom with pious Christians to make vows and promises to God; to beg His help for some special end, or to thank Him for some benefit received. They have promised pilgrimages, good works or alms and they have vowed to erect churches, convents, hospitals or schools.

**Q. 1237. Is it a sin not to fulfill our vows?**

A. Not to fulfill our vows is a sin, mortal or venial, according to the nature of the vow and the intention we had in making it.

**Q. 1238. Are we bound to keep an unlawful oath or vow?**

A. We are not bound, but, on the contrary, positively forbidden to keep an unlawful oath or vow. We are guilty of sin in taking such an oath or making such a vow, and we would be guilty of still greater sin by keeping them.

**Q. 1239. What is forbidden by the second Commandment?**

A. The second Commandment forbids all false, rash, unjust, and unnecessary oaths, blasphemy, cursing, and profane words.

**Q. 1240. When is an oath rash, unjust or unnecessary?**

A. An oath is rash when we are not sure of the truth of what we swear; it is unjust when it injures another unlawfully; and it is unnecessary when there is no good reason for taking it.

**Q. 1241. What is blasphemy, and what are profane words?**

A. Blasphemy is any word or action intended as an insult to God. To say He is cruel or find fault with His works is blasphemy. It is a much greater sin than cursing or taking God's name in vain. Profane words mean here bad, irreverent or irreligious words.

**Q. 1242. What is the third Commandment?**

A. The third Commandment is: Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

**Q. 1243. What are we commanded by the third Commandment?**

A. By the third Commandment we are commanded to keep holy the Lord's day and the holydays of obligation, on which we are to give our time to the service and worship of God.

**Q. 1244. What are holydays of obligation?**

A. Holydays of obligation are special feasts of the Church on which we are bound, under pain of mortal sin, to hear Mass and to keep from servile or bodily labors when it can be done without great loss or inconvenience. Whoever, on account of their circumstances, cannot give up work on holydays of obligation should make every effort to hear Mass and should also explain in confession the necessity of working on holydays.

**Q. 1245. How are we to worship God on Sundays and holydays of obligation?**

A. We are to worship God on Sundays and holydays of obligation by hearing Mass, by prayer, and by other good works.

**Q. 1246. Name some of the good works recommended for Sunday.**

A. Some of the good works recommended for Sunday are: The reading of religious books or papers, teaching Catechism, bringing relief to the poor or sick, visiting the Blessed Sacrament, attending Vespers, Rosary or other devotions in the Church; also attending the meetings of religious sodalities or societies. It is not necessary to spend the whole Sunday in such good works, but we should give some time to them, that for the love of God we may do a little more than what is strictly commanded.

**Q. 1247. Is it forbidden, then, to seek any pleasure or enjoyment on Sunday?**

A. It is not forbidden to seek lawful pleasure or enjoyment on Sunday, especially to those who are occupied during the week, for God did not intend the keeping of the Sunday to be a punishment, but a benefit to us. Therefore, after hearing Mass we may take such recreation as is necessary or useful for us; but we should avoid any vulgar, noisy or disgraceful amusements that turn the day of rest and prayer into a day of scandal and sin.

**Q. 1248. Are the Sabbath day and the Sunday the same?**

A. The Sabbath day and the Sunday are not the same. The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, and is the day which was kept holy in the old law; the Sunday is the first day of the week, and is the day which is kept holy in the new law.

**Q. 1249. What is meant by the Old and New Law?**

A. The Old Law means the law or religion given to the Jews; the New Law means the law or religion given to Christians.

**Q. 1250. Why does the Church command us to keep the Sunday holy instead of the Sabbath?**

A. The Church commands us to keep the Sunday holy instead of the Sabbath because on Sunday Christ rose from the dead, and on Sunday He sent the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles.

**Q. 1251. Do we keep Sunday instead of Saturday holy for any other reason?**

A. We keep Sunday instead of Saturday holy also to teach that the Old Law is not now binding upon us, but that we must keep the New Law, which takes its place.

**Q. 1252. What is forbidden by the third Commandment?**

A. The third Commandment forbids all unnecessary servile work and whatever else may hinder the due observance of the Lord's day.

**Q. 1253. What are servile works?**

A. Servile works are those which require labor rather of body than of mind.

**Q. 1255. Are servile works on Sunday ever lawful?**

A. Servile works are lawful on Sundays when the honor of God, the good of our neighbor, or necessity requires them.

**Q. 1256. Give some examples of when the honor of God, the good of our neighbor or necessity may require servile works on Sunday.**

A. The honor of God, the good of our neighbor or necessity may require servile works on Sunday, in such cases as the preparation of a place for Holy Mass, the saving of property in storms or accidents, the cooking of meals and similar works.