

The Second Commandment

“Brothers and sisters, we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose and effort of faith, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, in accord with the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.” This is a beautiful prayer of St. Paul for the Christians in the Greek city of Thessalonica. I’d like to zero in on one phrase of this prayer...

“That the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you.” What does this mean? Here the verb “glorify” means to “honor.” St. Paul is praying that the name of Jesus will be honored by the Thessalonians. To bring this to the present day, how can we Christians today honor the name of Jesus? One way is by not dishonoring his name.

This brings us to the Second Commandment. Those of you who were here last week may remember that I spoke on the first of the Ten Commandments. God gave the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel about 3200 years ago, but they are intended for all people for all time. The Ten Commandments reveal very serious

obligations. They express man's fundamental duties toward God and toward his neighbor. They are fundamentally unchangeable, and they oblige always and everywhere. No one can dispense from them. The Ten Commandments are engraved by God in the human heart.

The Second Commandment is **“You shall not take the name of the LORD in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”** What is this commandment about? It required respect for God's name. It also means respect for the names of everyone associated with God, like Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints.

What are some ways that we could dishonor God's name? Let's ask ourselves some questions...

Have I ever made a promise in God's name that I didn't keep?

Have I ever committed blasphemy? What is blasphemy? Blasphemy means using words against God, words of hatred, criticism or defiance. It also means speaking disrespectfully of God or misusing his name. Blasphemy also means speaking poorly about or people and things

associated with God, like His Church, the saints, and sacred things—that is, things set apart of the worship of God. It's also committing blasphemy if we use God's name to cover up criminal practices, reduce people to slavery, torture people or put them to death. One big trouble with blasphemy is that it can provoke other people to reject religion.

Have I used God's name to make a false oath, like to say, "I swear by God's name that such and such happened," when it really didn't happen? An example of this would be committing perjury in court.

Have I used God's name to make an oath about something trivial, like to say, "I swear to God that I am going to return that book to you tomorrow"? This goes back to something Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount. He said, **"You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all...Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one."** The Church has understood these words of Our Lord to mean that we should not use God's name for trivial things or for any purpose contrary to the dignity of

persons or the good of the Christian religion. It is OK to make oaths for good and serious reasons, like in court.

Some more questions...Have I ever seriously wished evil on someone else?

In the Mystery of Reconciliation, have I ever lied or intentionally not mentioned a serious sin I committed?

Have I made an oath in a secret society? (Free Masons, KKK?)

We can fail to glorify God's name if we break the Second Commandment in the ways I've talked about today. We can also fail to glorify God's name by anything we do that makes Him look bad, so to speak. If people know we are a Christian, and we do something that scandalizes them, they might think to themselves, "If this is what a follower of this God is like, I don't think much of Him. I don't even know if he exists. Many people have left the Church because of scandalous behavior by Christians.

To give you one example, a friend of mine used to work in an agricultural co-op. He had been brought up Catholic. His boss was a Catholic too, and was the chairman of his parish's pastoral council. His boss also

kept a pile of pornographic magazines on his desk, and encouraged my friend to look at them. My friends rightly refused. He told his boss, "I'm not going to look at that filth." But my friend also quit going to the Catholic Church after that. He told me, "If the Catholic Church has people like that in leadership positions, I don't think much of it."

I know none of us are perfect. Most of us have probably failed to glorify God's name in some way. Most of us have probably broken the Second Commandment at some point. That's the bad news.

The good news is that God loves us and is happy to forgive us if we ask Him to. He will also help us do better in the future. How? Let's go back to that prayer of St. Paul: **"Brothers and sisters, we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose and effort of faith, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, in accord with the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ."**

God's purpose is that we should glorify His name, including the name above all names, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is his purpose for us, that we

honor Him by everything we say and do. We can't do it on our own. But between our efforts of faith and God's great power, we can glorify Him. We can honor Him. And if we do that, God will honor us. That's how much He loves us.