



The Ten Commandments are the moral law given by God to His people. They are the compass that guides us on the path to salvation, an unchanging standard that transcends time. But where exactly do they appear in the Bible? Why are there different ways of numbering them? And what is the correct way according to the Catholic Church?

This article will answer these questions in depth, yet in an accessible way, clarifying misunderstandings and reinforcing the importance of the Commandments in our Christian lives today.

Where Do the Ten Commandments Appear in the Bible?

The Commandments were given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai and are recorded in two key passages of the Old Testament:

1. **Exodus 20:1-17**
2. **Deuteronomy 5:4-21**

Both texts present the same divine law, although with slight differences in wording. In Deuteronomy, Moses reaffirms the Commandments for the new generation of Israelites before they enter the Promised Land.

Example from Exodus:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:2-3)

It is important to note that the Bible does not number them explicitly, which has led to different ways of listing them throughout history.



The Origin and History of Their Numbering

From the earliest centuries, the Church understood the importance of the Ten Commandments as a summary of the moral law. However, different traditions emerged regarding their numbering.

1. The Catholic Church's Numbering

The Church follows the numbering established by St. Augustine of Hippo (5th century), based on Jewish tradition. This numbering was adopted in the Catechism and has been the official teaching for centuries.

According to the Catholic Church, the Commandments are ordered as follows:

1. You shall love God above all things.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

2. The Protestant Error in Numbering

When Martin Luther broke away from the Church in the 16th century, he decided to change the numbering of the Commandments. His version follows a later Jewish and Calvinist tradition, separating the first Commandment into two and merging the ninth and tenth into one.

In the Protestant version, they divide the commandment on idolatry into two:

1. You shall have no other gods.
2. You shall not make images.

This interpretation is incorrect because the prohibition of idolatry is entirely part of the first Commandment. Furthermore, by merging the two Commandments on coveting into one, they



lose the moral distinction between impure desires toward one's neighbor and coveting material goods.

Why Does This Difference Matter?

The Protestant change in numbering is not trivial. By making an artificial distinction between the prohibition of images and the worship of God, many evangelical groups have developed a mistaken view of religious imagery.

Iconoclasts (image destroyers) attack the veneration of statues, paintings, and other sacred symbols without understanding the difference between veneration and worship.

The Catholic Church has always defended the biblical teaching that sacred images are not idols but means to elevate the soul to God. As the Second Council of Nicaea (787) explains:

| *“The honor given to an image is directed to the original.”*

This Protestant confusion is an example of how misinterpretation of Scripture can lead to doctrinal errors.

The Present-Day Significance of the Commandments

Today, the Ten Commandments remain the foundation of Christian morality. In a world where moral relativism is growing, these laws remind us that there is an objective truth established by God.

Examples of Their Relevance Today

- **“You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain”** calls us to respect God in a time when His Name is used lightly or even blasphemed in media and social networks.
- **“Honor your father and mother”** challenges us to value the family in a society that often attacks or distorts it.



- **“You shall not commit adultery”** is an urgent reminder in the face of today’s hypersexualized culture.

Each Commandment is an invitation to live in holiness and communion with God.

Conclusion: Returning to God’s Law

The Ten Commandments are not just ancient rules but the sure path to eternal happiness. The Church teaches us the correct way to number and understand them, in contrast to the errors introduced by Protestantism.

In a world that has forgotten God, remembering and living the Commandments is an act of love and faithfulness. They are the key to building a just society and a life of grace.

Final Reflection:

| *“If you love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)*

Today, more than ever, we are called to rediscover the beauty and power of God’s law in our lives. Are we willing to obey it with love and courage?