



The Seventh Commandment, “You shall not steal,” is not merely a literal prohibition against taking what does not belong to us, but a profound call to justice, solidarity, and detachment in our lives. In a world marked by greed, inequality, and exploitation, this commandment invites us to reflect on our relationship with material goods, with others, and, above all, with God.

The reality of today constantly tests our ability to live according to this precept. In a globalized environment where consumption seems to be the basis of happiness and success is measured in terms of material wealth, “You shall not steal” is a reminder that we are called to live justly, generously, and responsibly. This commandment has implications that go far beyond the simple act of taking something that does not belong to us: it is an invitation to live with integrity, respecting the rights of others and promoting a more equitable society.

## Understanding the Seventh Commandment

The commandment “You shall not steal” appears in the book of **Exodus (20:15)** and **Deuteronomy (5:19)** as part of the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. This commandment, like the others, does not only refer to an external action (stealing something physical) but calls us to cultivate a just and generous heart.

Stealing, in its broadest sense, is any act that deprives a person of what rightfully belongs to them. This includes not only direct theft but also more subtle injustices such as fraud, labor exploitation, tax evasion, and corruption. Through this commandment, God calls us to respect the property of others, to be honest in our transactions, and to act with justice in our economic and social relationships.

But the Seventh Commandment also invites us to go further: to question the social and economic structures that perpetuate inequality and poverty. As the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** states: *“The seventh commandment forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of one’s neighbor and wronging him in any way with respect to his goods”* (CCC 2408).

## Justice and Solidarity: Pillars of a Christian Society

The call not to steal is a call to live in **justice**. Justice is a cardinal virtue that leads us to give each person what is rightfully theirs. This includes respecting their rights, their dignity, and their possessions. In a society where greed and the desire to accumulate prevail, justice becomes a form of resistance against structures that promote inequality.

However, justice is not enough if it is not accompanied by **solidarity**. The Church reminds us



that we are responsible not only for our actions but also for building a more just society. This means sharing our goods with those in need, working for the common good, and promoting equity in all areas of life.

In his encyclical **Caritas in Veritate**, **Pope Benedict XVI** states: *“Justice is the primary way of charity.”* In other words, we cannot speak of charity or Christian love if we do not first strive to live justly. By living out the commandment “You shall not steal,” we not only avoid doing wrong but actively build a society based on equity, mutual respect, and the common good.

## Greed and Consumerism: The Great Challenges of Today

One of the greatest challenges to living the Seventh Commandment today is **rampant consumerism** and the culture of greed. In a society that promotes “having” over “being,” it is easy to fall into the temptation of measuring our personal worth in terms of what we possess or desire to possess. Advertising campaigns, social media, and constant pressure to acquire more material goods feed the false idea that happiness is found in consumption.

This culture is not only incompatible with the Christian call to simplicity and detachment but perpetuates an economic system based on exploitation and imbalance. **Pope Francis**, in his encyclical **Laudato Si'**, denounces the “throwaway culture” that affects not only material goods but also people. The poorest and most vulnerable are often the most affected by this system, which prioritizes profit over human dignity.

Greed, the insatiable desire to possess more than we need, not only separates us from God but also from others. It makes us selfish, unable to see the needs of those around us, and perpetuates the structural injustice that condemns millions of people to live in poverty.

## Detachment and Generosity: Christian Responses

In response to this reality, the commandment “You shall not steal” invites us to cultivate **detachment** and **generosity**. Detachment does not mean living in absolute poverty but learning to use material goods justly and in solidarity, without allowing them to dominate our lives. As **St. Ignatius of Loyola** teaches in his Spiritual Exercises, we are called to be indifferent to material goods, using them only insofar as they bring us closer to God and the service of others.

**Generosity**, on the other hand, is a virtue that drives us to share what we have with those in need. This is not just a matter of occasional charity but a way of life that places our neighbor



at the center of our decisions. In the **Parable of the Good Samaritan**, Jesus shows us that true justice and solidarity are expressed in the active care of others, especially the most vulnerable.

In a society marked by greed, living generously is countercultural. It means breaking with the logic of hoarding and adopting a logic of sharing, caring, and valuing people above things.

## The Common Good and the Universal Destination of Goods

The **Social Doctrine of the Church** also reminds us that all the Earth’s goods are intended for the well-being of all humanity. This principle of the **universal destination of goods** invites us to consider that, although private property is legitimate, it must always serve the common good.

The Catechism explains this clearly: *“In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labor, and enjoy their fruits. The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race”* (CCC 2402).

In this sense, the Seventh Commandment challenges us to rethink our use of goods, not as exclusive possessions but as resources we are called to manage responsibly for the good of all. This implies a call to social justice, the fight against poverty, and the construction of a more equitable society where everyone has access to what is necessary to live with dignity.

## Conclusion: A Call to Social and Personal Conversion

The commandment “You shall not steal” is not just a rule to avoid wrongdoing but an invitation to live in truth, justice, and solidarity. In a world marked by greed and inequality, we are called to be living signs of God’s generosity, sharing what we have, and working actively for a more just and fraternal society.

Living this commandment today challenges us to examine our attitudes towards material goods, to resist the culture of consumption, and to commit ourselves to building the common good. In doing so, we not only avoid the sin of theft but also contribute to the creation of a more just world, where the dignity of each person is respected, and the Earth’s resources are shared equitably among all.