



# Roots & Wings

A publication of the Infant Jesus of Prague Catholic Life Committee

March 2007

Volume 6

Issue 7

## The Seventh Commandment: *You shall not steal* (Exodus 20:15)

By Laurie Liesen

The Seventh Commandment states that we should not take things that do not belong to us. Most people realize that stealing is wrong because it is taking another person's property against the will of the owner. God calls us to respect other people and their property. Nevertheless, there are so many different ways we do violate this commandment in our lives and within our culture. In addition to taking what doesn't belong to us, stealing includes taking things through violence, not paying wages that are due, and fraudulent buying or selling. (Aquinas 1992). The Seventh Commandment, therefore, calls us to see how we exploit and harm others in the ways we structure wages, the products we produce and purchase, and how we use the natural resources of the earth.

These various types of stealing are wrong because they are examples of selfish and self-centered behaviors and attitudes that are harmful to our relationships with others. According to Father Hal Stockert, the Old Testament prophets and Jesus were not merely concerned with protecting one's private property. "The issue was one of harming a brother or sister through one's material goods. In short, the issue is a matter of exploitation - the exploitation of individual need and hardship, the exploitation of the weak by the strong, the enfranchised by the disenfranchised, the un-established by the established, the exploitation of another's dependence on me, my wealth, position, power or good will, such as it may be" (Stockert 1997).



**"You shall not steal."**

Exodus 20:15

Consequently, the Seventh Commandment calls us to practice the virtues of temperance, justice, and solidarity (McBride 2001). The virtue of temperance calls us to NOT to focus on only our own needs, wants, and desires. God calls us to live our lives in the context of concern and love for others. Consequently, we practice the virtue of justice when we care for the sick and the elderly; feed, clothe and house the poor; and visit the imprisoned. In addition to practicing these corporal works of mercy, we need to examine how our businesses' practices and governments' policies affect the poor and helpless in our society. Finally, it is through solidarity with others that we can live according to the Seventh Commandment. This commandment celebrates the value of trust and honesty. A lack of trust threatens communities and people's relationships with others,

and if we can restore trust within our community, people will be less inclined to take what is not theirs (McBride 2001). Overall, living according to the Seventh Commandment is not just refraining from stealing. It calls us to ensure that our economic decisions are made with care and concern for all members of our community.

Sources:

Aquinas, St. Thomas (1992). *God's Greatest Gifts: Commentaries on the Commandments and the Sacraments*. Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press.

McBride, Alfred (2001). *The Ten Commandments: Covenant of Love*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Stockert, Fr. Hal (1997). "Decalogue—The Ten Commandments Today." Catholic Information Network. [www.cin.org/wwdec2.html](http://www.cin.org/wwdec2.html). Accessed 17 December 2003.

### Why Do We Do That?

Did you ever wonder where the tradition of Easter Eggs comes from? It is most-likely a pagan tradition meant to symbolize earth being reborn each Spring. Christianity adapted this custom to symbolize the rebirth of humanity through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Catholic history, the use of eggs was forbidden during Lent. They were brought to the table on Easter Day, colored red to symbolize the Easter joy.



Sources:

The Catholic Encyclopedia at [www.newadvent.org/cathen/05224d.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05224d.htm) accessed March 8, 2004

The University of Kansas at [www3.kumc.edu/diversity/ethnic\\_relig/easter.html](http://www3.kumc.edu/diversity/ethnic_relig/easter.html) accessed March 8, 2004

## A Parent's Perspective On The Seventh Commandment

### – Thou Shalt Not Steal

By: Howard Smith

“Don’t take without asking,” as we say in our family. Very young children develop a sense of ownership, especially of toys, early on. This soon seems to extend to everything they can reach. An ability to share comes later, as does a sense that others have their own possessions.

How can we instill in our children the values of sharing and a respect for the property of others? By being patient and gentle with them. By sharing our things reasonably with them and respecting their possessions as we do our own.

The spiritual intent of the Seventh Commandment outlines that we honor the property rights of others while sharing with others the material bounty God has created on Earth. For more information see the US Conference of Bishops website [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) / catechism and search to the Seventh Commandment.

*This article was written in 2004 by Howard Smith, an IJP parent who passed away several years ago. The Catholic Life Committee continues to be inspired by the sentiments expressed in the article.*

### Lenten Projects Around IJP

Be sure to ask your child if they are participating in any of these meaningful Lenten projects around IJP:

- \*Rice Bowl
- \*Reconciliation
- \*Living Stations of the Cross
- \*Stations of the Cross
- \*Weekly Mass Attendance (Junior High)
- \*Mission Banks



## An Examination of Conscience With The Catholic Life Committee—You Shall Not Steal

As we examine this Commandment, let us reflect on all the different ways we may “steal” in our day to day lives:

- † Have I cheated on a test or assignment?
- † Have I betrayed the trust of parents, friends or teachers?
- † Do I let others, like my parents, do my homework for me?
- † Do I help care for the environment and not steal God’s gifts of nature?
- † Do I respect the rights of others and not steal their self-esteem?
- † Do I buy products from companies that pay fair wages?
- † Do I share my wealth and resources with others?

### IJP and The Friends of Conservation

The Seventh Commandment calls us, among other things, to preserve God’s creation. The Catholic Life Committee is, therefore, proud to announce that IJP 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes are participating in a twin school exchange program with Talek Primary School of the Massai Mara National Reserve in Kenya. This project is in conjunction with an organization called The Friends of Conservation, and has a home office based in Oak Brook, IL. The Friends of Conservation programs work with communities to balance their needs with those of wildlife. The organization joins with local citizens in Eastern Africa to support sustainable ways of living in harmony with wildlife, ecosystems and the environment.

The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers will focus primarily on Social Studies and Science, as well as Language Arts curriculum with this exchange program.

We are pleased to be working directly with a school that is the host to The Friends of Conservation’s field station. The Shared Program will involve many interesting activities that will be completed during school time, many of them related to Social Studies, Science, Language Arts and Art. We will be sending our completed projects to the Talek Middle School in Kenya periodically through the end of this school year. Talek Middle School will in turn share similar projects with us.

To learn more about The Friends of Conservation you can visit the website: [www.thefriendsofconservation.org/](http://www.thefriendsofconservation.org/)

### Prayer for March

Generous Father, you have placed us at the table of abundance that is the goods of the earth. You have taught us that all these goods are meant for the benefit of every human being. Fill us with the courage and wisdom to keep the needs of the poor and helpless before us and to do what we can to help them.

Amen.

