

The Decalogue – duties to God

The first four commandments include our duties to God, or how to honor God. These are summed up by Jesus Christ when He teaches us: "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.**"

1. I am the Lord, your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.

In ancient times, but even in our present days, many people consider that there are more gods (deities) or place their hope in other people or things, not in God, and thus they **jeopardize their salvation, because they do not know the true and the only God**. By this commandment, God shows us **the truth that there is only one God**, the Creator of the world and ours, and that **He alone is to be honored** / respected, obeyed, worshiped, and loved.

People fulfill this commandment when they **recognize** that God is the giver and master of their life, and in everything they do **trust in the help and love of God** for themselves, **believe** in Him, **listen and obey His commandments**. (E.g. pray, worship, call His name, do good deeds in His name, and strive to please Him.)

2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.

In ancient times, but even in our present days, there were many people who represented their gods as statues of real or fantastic beings, and worshiped them, bringing gifts and sacrifices, considering that it was for their salvation. This practice is called **idolatry**. The idols worshiped by people today are: money, fashion, alcohol / other drugs, stars / artists, etc.

We worship God and honor the saints (God's friends), having the **cult of the icons**, but we do not honor the material from which they are made, but our minds and hearts are directed to the one that is depicted in the icon, the icon being just a **face** or an **image** that reminds us of the one represented on it (E.g.: we have in the house the pictures of loved ones who are far away or died, and their picture reminds us of the person whose face is in it, and we are spiritually linked with them, we fill ourselves with love for them).

3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

By this commandment we are urged **to use with great awe and reverence the name of God** ("vain" = "emptied of true meaning") and of all things that are consecrated to Him (through a special sanctification service) like: churches, icons, cult objects, holy matter (Holy Communion, Holy Water, etc.).

It is forbidden to use God's name thoughtlessly or disrespectfully, by **swearing** (God does not hurt anyone and is not to blame for what is wrong), **curses** (God does not want anyone's evil) and **breaking promises given to God** (false or untruthful oaths).

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

In the **Old Testament**, the **Sabbath** (which in Hebrew means rest, peace) is celebrated on the seventh day of the week, **Saturday**, in remembrance of God's creation of the world (on the seventh day God rested from acts of creation, meaning He stopped creating new beings and since then He is resting, awaiting the **loving gratitude of the world** for creating and caring for it); on **Saturday**, the Hebrew people did not work, instead they spent their day in prayers of thanksgiving. But other people were unaware of this law, and they still lived with the consequences of the ancestral sin.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, brings to all people reconciliation with God through His Sacrifice on the Cross, and the **Day of Resurrection** of our Lord Jesus Christ becomes the **Lord's Day**, the day of full rest for God and men in the name of Jesus Christ.

For us Christians, the **day of rest** is **Sunday**, the first day of the week, when we do not work, but participate in the Divine Liturgy; we unite with Him through Holy Communion, resting in His love. We are allowed to work (after the counsel of Jesus Christ, Who says that He and the Father always work for the good and mercy of men) the **works of Christian mercy**, but not work for material, selfish purposes.

The Decalogue or The Ten Commandments

1. I am the Lord, your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's.

(Exodus 20, 1-17)