

FATHER REGINALD MARTIN, O.P., *DIRECTOR*

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## A CENTURY WELL SPENT

*Fr. Reginald Martin, O.P.*

On December 12, 1966, the superior of the Western Dominicans sent a letter to Paul Duffner.

Dear Father Duffner:

I hereby appoint you to the following offices in the Province:

1. Treasurer of the Province
2. Provincial Promoter of the Rosary Confraternity
3. Director of the Rosary Center and Shrine of St. Jude
4. Manager of the Dominican Confraternity Building
5. Member of the Province Planning Commission

With the assurance of my best wishes, I remain....

One may wonder what was left for the other members of the Western Province to do! Our brother was born on April 14, 1915, exactly three years after the sinking of the RMS Titanic. By 1966, Fr. Duffner was preparing to celebrate the twenty-sixth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, and had served as the Province's novice master for fifteen years, and would soon be on his way to the Dominicans' mission in Ocosingo, in Chiapas, the southernmost state in Mexico, where he labored for the next eight.

Fr. Duffner was a superb athlete. He enjoyed baseball, and one of his first novices recalls his once putting out a hand to vault a fence and bring home a football that had gone astray. Until recently, he was the envy of the Dominican community at Holy Rosary Priory in Portland, Oregon, the only member of the group spared the annoyance of taking a single prescription medication!

Friends of the Rosary Center will remember the twenty years Fr. Duffner directed this – perhaps his most beloved – ministry, carefully guiding its daily activities, writing reflections for *Light and Life*, and entering the names, in his superb handwriting, of those who wished to join the Rosary Confraternity. When I arrived to work with him I was astounded at his creativity; one of our pamphlets is too small to offer as a single purchase, so we only provide them



*Silhouette by Sr. Jean Dorcy, O.P.*

in sets of twenty-five. Fr. Duffner discerned how many twenty-five weigh, and saved himself the mind-numbing chore of counting the pamphlets by simply arranging them on the Center's postage meter!

Fr. Duffner is one of only two Western Dominicans to serve in the Province's extreme limits. In addition to his assignment in Mexico, he also spent two years with his brothers at Holy Family Cathedral, in Anchorage, Alaska. But he will be remembered most fondly for the four decades he spent in Portland, where Holy Rosary's parish hall stands as a lasting tribute to his creativity and concern for God's People entrusted to his care when he served as pastor. Over the years many have suggested naming the building in his honor, but he has steadfastly refused.

*(continued on page 4)*

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# THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

## The Ten Commandments: Part Eight

### THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

#### "Thou shalt not steal"

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

#### LOOKING PAST THE NEGATIVE

In our last reflection we observed the necessity to look beyond the negative prohibition of the Sixth Commandment and recognize it as a practical illustration of the chaste social relations our Baptism establishes among God's People and calls us to respect, cherish and nourish. We may make a similar remark regarding the Seventh Commandment.

#### A SOCIAL CONTRACT

In the beginning, God entrusted the care of His creation to our First Parents. He said, "...fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the birds of the air and every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Gen. 1:28) The unspoken understanding was our parents' willingness to exercise their care of God's gifts for the benefit of those who would come after them. Our *Catechism* names this the *universal destination of goods*, and remarks,

The *right to private property*, acquired or received in a just way, does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of mankind. The *universal destination of goods* remains primordial, even if the promotion of the common good requires respect for the right to private property and its exercise. (CCC, 2403)

#### KEEPING OTHERS IN MIND

As the text continues, with a comment from the document of Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, it reminds us that while we may own the goods we have earned or inherited, we must never forget "*they can benefit others as well...The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence....*" (CCC, 2404) This vocation of stewardship means we must take seriously the example Jesus presents of the man who entrusts his property to his servants before undertaking a journey. (Mt. 25) When the man returns he rewards the servants who have invested his money profitably; he scorns and punishes the servant who has buried the treasure entrusted to him.

Hoarding what we have received is not an option, and in our modern age, when science and technology have made such advances that "goods" and "treasure" are no longer simply material objects, we have an obligation to share the knowledge that will benefit humankind. Pope St. John Paul II observed this nearly a quarter century ago, in his Encyclical Letter, *Centesimus Annus*, when he wrote,

...the wealth of the industrialized nations is based much more on this kind of ownership than on natural resources...It is necessary to...provide all individuals and nations with the basic conditions which will enable them to share in development.

Our *Catechism* places these considerations within a framework of the moral virtues. It observes we must practice Temperance "so as to moderate attachment to this world's goods" and Justice, "to preserve our neighbor's rights and render him what is his due." Finally, we must embrace "the practice of solidarity, in accordance with the golden rule and in keeping with the generosity of the Lord...." (CCC, 2407)

#### THOU SHALT NOT

The lens of the Seventh Commandment focuses these considerations on our relations and dealings with one another. First and foremost, the commandment forbids theft, which our *Catechism* defines as "*usurping another's property against the reasonable will of the owner.*" (CCC, 2408) This is so easy a concept to grasp we might consider our discussion of the Seventh Commandment closed. But theft masks itself in a number of subtle and harmful ways. Refusing to return objects we have found or borrowed may be fairly lightweight offenses; fraud, unjust wages, and taking advantage of the ignorance or economic disadvantage of another person are far more serious.

#### ADDITIONAL FORMS OF THEFT

The *Catechism* mentions even more sophisticated forms of theft, some of which seem taken from the headlines in the business section of the morning newspaper,

*speculation, in which one tries to manipulate the price of goods artificially in order to gain an advantage to the detriment of others; corruption in which one influences the judgment of those who must make decisions according to law; appropriation and use for private purposes of the common goods of an enterprise; work poorly done; tax evasion; forgery of checks and invoices; excessive expenses and waste....* (CCC, 2409)

#### PROTECTING JUSTICE

One 20th Century businessman was known to shake his head whenever he had to sign a contract. When asked why, he replied, "My father used to say, 'if these people won't take my word for something, why should they take my signature?'" This question points to the

ideal, which is the community of Christ's Body into which we are baptized. If we all lived up to our baptismal call, the world would not even require promises to regulate social and commercial interaction. We would simply remember we have been created in God's image and if we look like God, we ought to act like God.

The (sad) reality of our everyday life is somewhat different. Justice is the virtue by which we give each person her or his due, and justice requires promises and contracts to guarantee that rights are respected, duties performed and obligations fulfilled. If they are not, justice demands restitution and reparation.

## UNUSUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Gambling might seem an odd subject to consider under the umbrella of justice, but it inserts itself when games are rigged against players, or advantage is taken of a player's weakness. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states

*Gambling is a type of...contract and as such is licit provided that there is a reasonable equality between the parties, that the transaction is conducted without fraud, and that the particular type of contract is not prohibited by law.*

Half a century ago, casinos featured signs that warned, "No one wins all the time; don't bet more than you can afford to lose." Today slot machines accept credit cards. No one may deny casino owners the right to earn a living, but one must feel a distinct sympathy for those who sacrifice or endanger their – or their families' – resources at the gaming table.

## A CALL FROM POPE FRANCIS

Another, perhaps more chilling form of slavery than that of the gamester addicted to his sport, is the physical slavery that even today haunts our world and continues to rob individuals of their freedom. In our last reflection we quoted Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, in which he laments the fate of those compelled to endure lives of enforced and degrading activity. The Holy Father's words are worth reconsidering here. "I have always been distressed at the lot of those who are victims," he writes.

*How I wish that all of us would hear God's cry, 'Where is your brother?' (Gen:4:9) Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Where is the brother or sister whom you are killing each day in clandestine warehouses, in rings of prostitution, in children used for begging, in exploiting undocumented labour? Let us not look the other way.... (EG, 211)*

Our *Catechism* quotes St. Paul, who urged an associate "to treat his Christian slave 'no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother....'" (Philemon 16)

## THE CARE OF CREATION

We might be surprised to learn Church teaching considers animals and, indeed, inanimate creation under the mantle of the Seventh Commandment, but these,

too, are part of the humankind's common heritage, and individuals and nations must take care that future generations have the same opportunity to enjoy God's bounty that we do.

*Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation. (CCC, 2415)*

## ECONOMICS AND HISTORY

More than one accounting professor has, no doubt, observed, "We're all born Capitalists," and our reflection thus far has demonstrated the Seventh Commandment's demand that we protect the honest rewards of individuals' labor and participation in economic society. But our *Catechism* cautions,

*A theory that makes profit the exclusive norm and ultimate end of economic activity is morally unacceptable. The disordered desire for money cannot but produce perverse effects. It is one of the causes of the many conflicts which disturb the social order. (CCC, 2424)*

In *The Birth of the Modern*, his study of society in the early 19th Century, Paul Johnson describes a world coming to grips with economic realities – and results – we can easily recognize today. The positive benefits were an unmistakable rise in living standards and access to education. But "...the difficulty about prosperity: It was fragile and, as economists had not yet learned, there was no chance that the rapid expansion of the years 1819—25 would be maintained at the same rate." (p. 883)

## THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE

The Church's social teaching, beginning with Pope Leo XII's 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, provides an antidote to the many radical and dangerous political movements that have plagued society as a result of the early economists' over-optimism.

Among the Church's precepts, which reflect the Seventh Commandment's concern for individual rights are: access to employment and just wages, together with the state's responsibility to guarantee "individual freedom and private property, as well as a stable currency and efficient public services...so that those who work and produce can enjoy the fruits of their labors and feel encouraged to work efficiently and honestly...." (CCC, 2431)

Beginning with the Book of Genesis, the Bible repeatedly presents a picture of human beings in social relations with one another. As our means of travel and communication have developed, these relations have expanded to the point they no longer merely describe families, tribes, or even cities; today we belong to a world society, and our *Catechism* reminds us "Various causes of a religious, political, economic and financial nature today give 'the social question a worldwide dimension'." (CCC, 2438) This means, the text explains, "There must be solidarity among nations which are already politically

*interdependent,”* a command Pope St. John Paul II summed up when he wrote of *“the supreme model of unity, which is a reflection of the intimate life of God... what we Christians mean by the word ‘communion.’”* (Encyclical Letter, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*)

## THE DEMAND OF JUSTICE

Here we must make two important distinctions. The first is between justice and charity; the second between the responsibilities of individual Christians and the institutional Church. Justice, we have seen, is the commitment to make certain each person receives what is hers or his. Charity is the virtue by which we love one another (and ourselves) for the love of God.

The *Catechism* quotes the Second Vatican Council when it observes, *“The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity.”* (CCC, 2446) Charity makes many legitimate demands upon us as individuals, but Justice demands social change we can only accomplish with the help of one another. And here we must remember that while the Church can offer education and support, the responsibility for change lies with us.

*It is not the role of the Pastors of the Church to intervene directly in the political structuring and organization of social life. This task is part of the vocation of the lay faithful, acting on their own initiative with their fellow citizens... It is the role of the laity “to animate temporal realities with Christian commitment, by which they show that they are witnesses and agents of peace and justice.”* (CCC, 2442)

In October, 2013, the world's bishops undertook a study of a document titled, *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*. It observed that parish communities are among the logical places to begin and sustain these evangelization efforts. By encouraging the vocation of the laity, the Second Vatican Council engaged an immense and (until then) largely untapped resource. Parish communities are not only an ideal place to begin the efforts that will reach out and welcome back individuals who have drifted away from the faith, but serve as excellent centers to educate and support individuals in their apostolic efforts.

## THE APPEAL OF CHARITY

At the same time, we must not turn our backs on the suffering Christ in our midst. As we look at those with whom we have been baptized into the Body of Christ, we realize immediately some have far less than others. Their want makes a legitimate claim on our charity, and the saints remind us we are all paupers before God. St. Augustine wrote,

*The man whom you hear is a beggar, and you yourself God's beggar. Petition is made to you, and you make your petition... You are at once full and empty; fill the empty with your fullness, that your emptiness may be filled with the fullness of God.*

Jesus' words remind us over and over that we have been created in God's image. God provides the model

and the example for our actions, but we set the standards by which God's love touches the world. Thus, Peter Chrysologus warned, *“Give to the poor, and you give to yourself. You will not be allowed to keep what you have refused to give others.”* And St. John Chrysostom, who seems never to have preached without making an appeal to his hearers' charity, said, *“Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them.”* ■

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## VALUABLE ADDITIONS

### TO THE SPIRITUAL BOOKSHELF

Dominican historian, Fr. Augustine Thompson, published a well-received biography of St. Francis, which has recently appeared in a paperback edition. This biography has been embraced by religious and secular experts alike, and many Franciscan superiors have said they will not be without it. The book portrays an engaging and sympathetic individual, but does not sentimentalize Francis, or attempt to gloss over his many challenges.

Popular theologian Mark Shea (whom Fr. Reginald knew when he served as pastor of the Dominican parish in Seattle, Washington), offers a new edition of a remarkable work, *Mary, Mother of the Son*. Originally published in three volumes, the work is now available in a single volume, and Fr. Reginald says it is hard to put down.

Volume one considers popular misunderstandings about Mary, the second treats Mary's virginity, Immaculate Conception and Assumption, and the third, which Rosary devotees may find most engaging, studies Marian devotions, including the Rosary. The volumes formed a part of Fr. Reginald's spiritual reading for many early mornings before the Blessed Sacrament; he urges the friends of the Rosary Center to share his enriching experience.

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## A CENTURY WELL SPENT (cont. from page 1)

In 1934, the future Fr. Duffner (then Paul William) wrote – in his impeccable hand – to the Provincial of the Western Dominicans:

*“You might, perhaps, ask why I wish to be a Religious, or why I chose the Dominican Order in preference to others.*



Fr. Duffner with the Martos, parents of the Fatima Seers. (1954)

*My grade school and high school education were both under Dominican sisters, who gave me some idea of the Dominican life and works. ...I have consulted my confessor and pastor, both of whom have assured me that a religious life would be better adapted to my disposition and character, and who told me that my wish to become a Dominican was excellent.”*

Those sisters and priests have long been rejoicing in fruit of their good advice, and we who have been blessed to share the Dominican Life with our brother Paul Aquinas thank them sincerely for their prayers and support! ■