

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Fourth Commandment begins the second section of the Ten Commandments which cover the second "Great Commandment" to love our neighbor as ourselves.

It rightly begins with "Honor your Father and Mother" which is our duty to our parents and therefore our whole family. The Catechism teaches that this commandment also extends to all those who hold rightful authority. We are to be respectful and obedient to teachers, employers, and rightful civil authorities.

The family is the first and most fundamental unit of society. Membership in a family is a universal human right and privilege. It is within the family that a child is properly nurtured and taught. The dignity of the family is supported by the fact that Jesus Christ himself was born into a human family and He himself honored Mary his mother and Joseph his earthly father. Furthermore, the human family reflects the relationship of the Holy Trinity which exists in an endless relationship of love.

When God commands us to honor our father and mother He is, by extension, reminding us of our duties to our whole extended family. We are to love and care for one another. We are to love and care not only for our parents, but for our grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters and members of our whole family.

The New Testament teaches that children should honor and obey their parents, but it goes on to say, "Parents do not provoke your children to anger." In other words, the command to honor your parents includes the understanding that the parents are also honoring the children by loving them with honesty, forgiveness and tender affection.

Our society has seen a terrible breakdown in the extended family. Through increased mobility, the suburban lifestyle which emphasizes the nuclear family of one man, one woman and children, with both parents working--all these factors have contributed to a breakdown of the family.

When the family breaks down, society breaks down because the family is the basic unit of society. Therefore, it is our responsibility to do everything we can to build up the human family. Do you want to make the world a better place? Make your home a better place. Do you want the world to be more forgiving, loving and caring? Make your own home more forgiving, loving and caring.

There is no greater blessing than a family where parents and children genuinely love and care for one another, and there is no greater sadness than a broken and unforgiving family.

God gives these commandments to lead us into happiness, not to make us miserable. So, remember this fourth commandment and keep it with joy. Honor your mother and father and do everything you can to build up forgiveness, love and peace within your home.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker