

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The first three commandments stand together to affirm our obligation to love God. The last seven commandments stand together to outline our obligation to love our neighbor. Jesus summarized the law by saying, "Love God and love your neighbor. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

The second commandment underlines and specifies the first commandment to love God first and foremost in our lives. To do this we honor Him with worship and adoration. When we skip Mass and intentionally do something else, we are putting some other 'god' before Him. If we do this intentionally and with full knowledge and without repentance, then we are in a state of mortal sin, for mortal sin is, by definition, any sin which takes us away from the love of God.

We should remember that it is possible to be in a state of mortal sin without feeling terribly guilty or ashamed of ourselves. The level of guilt and shame we feel for our sins is not a reliable indicator of the seriousness of our sin.

The second commandment teaches us to not take the name of the Lord in vain. For the Jewish people the name of the Lord God was so holy that it could not only not be uttered aloud, but it could not even be written completely. They used a roundabout way of speaking to refer to the Lord God. This total reverence for the name of the Lord is lightened in the Christian tradition because Jesus Christ has shown us the Father and opened the way to a closer relationship with God.

Nevertheless, we are not to use the name of God in vain. This means using God's name, or the name of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin or the saints in any way that is degrading, cheap or blasphemous. If you use the Lord's name as a curse word in the same way that you might use a dirty, toilet or coarse sexual word to express your anger or frustration, then you are putting God on the same level as that filth. Using God's name in vain is a way of trampling God in the dirt or throwing the precious things of our faith down into the mud and trash of this world.

On the positive side, we are expected to show reverence and respect for the name of the Lord. When we pray, we cross ourselves reverently and say the holy name of the Trinity. When we mention the name of Jesus in the liturgy, we bow our heads in a sign of respect and reverence. When we pray to God and lift our hearts and voices and use His name, we bow our head in prayer. When we come to Mass, we take time to dress appropriately--not wearing beach wear to come into the presence of the Almighty. All these signs and actions of worship show our respect and love for God and for the holy name.

Finally, the actions and words of worship are a witness. I am always pleased when visitors come to OLR and comment on the reverence and respect our congregation shows at worship. When visitors come to Catholic worship, they should see our reverent love for God and realize there is a powerful difference.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker