

Catholic Church: Laws that govern how we should live.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Several months ago, I reminded you of the 10 Commandments, the laws that God gave to Moses. These laws should guide us in our daily lives.

However, the Catholic Church also has laws that govern how we should live. The precepts of the Church are special duties which Catholics are expected to obey and fulfill.

These precepts set down certain acts of religion and penance in order to apply the commandments of God and the teachings of the Gospel to the lives of the faithful. Our Christian life requires a commitment to pray and participate in the liturgy and sacraments.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that "The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the indispensable minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor" (2041).

These are the precepts of the Church:

1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. "The first precept requires the faithful to participate in the Eucharistic celebration when the Christian community gathers together on the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord" (2042).

2. You shall confess your sins at least once a year. This precept "ensures preparation for the Eucharist by the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, which continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness" (2042).

3. You shall humbly receive your Creator in Holy Communion at least during the Easter season. This duty may be fulfilled between the first Sunday of Lent to Trinity Sunday. It guarantees reception of the Body and Blood of the Lord during the Paschal season, which is the heart of the Church's liturgy.

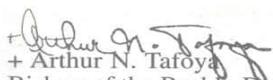
4. You shall keep holy the holy days of obligation. "This completes the Sunday observance by participation in the principal liturgical feasts which honor the mysteries of the Lord, the Virgin Mary, and the saints" (2043). The holy days of obligation in the United States are: ■ All Sundays of the year ■ Jan. 1, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God ■ Ascension of Our Lord ■ Aug. 15, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary ■ November 1, All Saints' Day ■ Dec. 8, the Immaculate Conception ■ Dec. 25, Christmas Day.

5. You shall observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence. All Catholics are bound to do some penance to help "prepare us for the liturgical feasts; they help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart" (2043).

6. "The faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his or her abilities" (2043).

These precepts are a description of the absolute minimum requirements for Catholics. Out of love for Christ and his Church, I pray that you will go beyond these basic requirements to participate fully in the life of the Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


+ Arthur N. Tafolla
Bishop of the Pueblo Diocese