

The Precepts Of The Church

The precepts of the Church concern the moral and Christian life united with the liturgy and nourished by it.

(CCC 2048)

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 very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor.

(CCC 2041)

The Precepts Of The Church

1. All Christians in any state or walk in life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love. All are called to holiness, “*be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.*”¹ In order to reach perfection, the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ’s gifts, his graces. In so doing, they devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor in acts of charity.²
2. It is in the Church together with all the baptized that the Christian fulfills his vocation. From the Church, he receives the Word of God, receives the graces of the sacraments, learns of the example of holiness.³
3. The Church, by direct command of Christ, is to “*Go and teach all nations*”⁴ and, “*whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*”⁵ To the Church belongs the right always and everywhere to announce moral principles, including those pertaining to the social order.⁶
5. The pope together with his bishops are the authentic teachers endowed with the authority of Christ to preach the faith to the people entrusted to them and how to put it in practice. This authority of the Magisterium extends also to specific precepts which have been established in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by the practice of liturgical worship.
4. These positive precepts or laws are “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:”⁷ and to encourage on the part of the faithful the foundations for their lives as Catholics.
5. The Church has established **Five Precepts** which the faithful should observe as external acts of witness of their faith.
6. The **First** of which is, “**You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.**”⁸ This precept requires that the faithful participate in the celebration of the Eucharist with the Catholic community on the day which we commemorate the Resurrection of the Lord.
7. The **Second** reads, “**You shall confess your sins at least once a year.**”⁹ Regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps to prepare one for the reception of the Eucharist and continue in the process of conversion and

¹ Matt 5:48; CCC. 2013

² Lumen Gentium. 40

³ CCC. 2030

⁴ Mark 16:15

⁵ Matt 18:18

⁶ CCC. 2032

⁷ CCC. 2041

⁸ CCC 2042

⁹ CCC 2042

The Precepts Of The Church

forgiveness which began at the time of Baptism.

8. The **Third** precept, “**You shall receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at least once a year during the Easter season,**”¹⁰ directs us to the reception of the source and summit of life for all in the Church.
9. The **Fourth** precept reads, “**You shall observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence.**”¹¹ Fasting is to refrain copious food or drink on certain set days as set by the Church; abstinence is to refrain from eating any meat product. These are considered as acts of self-sacrifice which can help us to grow in self-discipline, mastering over our instincts, leading to greater holiness. As we are told in Matthew, Jesus “fasted for forty days and forty nights,”¹² at the beginning of His ministry.
10. The **Fifth** precept directs the faithful with the duty of “**Providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his/her ability,**”¹³ contributing to the support of the activities and ministries of the Church with time, talent and financial resources.

¹⁰ CCC 2042

¹¹ CCC 2043

¹² Matt 4:2

¹³ CCC 2043