



II Respect for people and their property

2407 In economic matters respect for human dignity requires the practice of the virtue of temperance, in order to moderate the attachment to the goods of this world; of justice, to preserve the rights of the neighbor and give him what is due; and of solidarity, following the rule of gold and according to the generosity of the Lord, that “being rich, for you became poor so that you enrich yourselves with your poverty” (2 Co 8, 9).

2408 The seventh commandment prohibits theft, that is to say, the usurpation of the alien good against the reasonable will of its owner. There is no robbery if the consent can be presumed or if the rejection is contrary to the reason and the universal destiny of the goods. This is the case of the urgent and obvious need in which the only means of remediating the immediate and essential necessities (food, housing, clothing...) is to dispose and use of the foreign goods (cf GS 69, 1).

2409 Any way to take or withhold unjustly the good of others, even if it does not contradict the provisions of civil law, is contrary to the seventh commandment. Thus, to deliberately withhold borrowed goods or lost objects, to defraud in the exercise of trade (CF DT 25, 13-16), to pay unfair wages (cf DT 24,14-15; St 5.4), raise prices by speculating with ignorance or need of others (cf Am 8, 4-6).

They are also morally illicit, the speculation by which it is intended to make vary artificially the valuation of the goods in order to obtain a benefit to the detriment of others; corruption by which the judgement of those who must make decisions under law is tainted; the private appropriation and use of a company's social assets; misdeeds, tax fraud, counterfeit checks and bills, excessive spending, wastefulness. Willfully inflicting damage on private or public property is contrary to moral law and requires reparation.

2410 The promises must be fulfilled, and the contracts rigorously observed to the

extent that the commitment acquired is morally fair. A notable part of economic and social life depends on the value of contracts between individuals or corporations. Thus, commercial contracts of sale or purchase, contracts of lease or work. Every contract must be made and executed in good faith.

2411 Contracts are subject to commutative justice, which regulates exchanges between people in the exact respect of their rights. Commutative justice obliges strictly; it requires the safeguarding of property rights, the payment of debts and the fulfilment of freely contracted obligations. Without commutative justice, no other form of justice is possible.

The commutative justice is distinguished from the legal justice, which refers to what the citizen owes equitably to the community, and of the distributive justice that regulates what the community owes to the citizens in proportion to their contributions and their needs.

2412 By virtue of the commutative justice, the reparation of the injustice committed requires the restitution of the stolen property to its owner:

Jesus blessed Zacchaeus for his resolution: “If I have disappointed someone, I will return the quadruple” (Lk 19, 8). Those who, directly or indirectly, have seized a foreign good, are obliged to reinstate it or to return the equivalent in nature or in kind if the thing has disappeared, as well as the fruits and benefits that its owner would have rightfully obtained from that good. They are also obliged to restore, in proportion to their responsibility and to the benefit obtained, all those who have participated in some way in the robbery, or who have availed themselves of it knowingly; for example, those who have ordered or helped or undercover.

2413 Gambling (of cards, etc.) or bets are not in themselves contrary to justice. However, they are morally unacceptable when depriving the person of what is necessary to meet their needs or those of others. The passion of the game is at risk of becoming a serious servitude. Gambling unfairly or cheating in games constitutes a serious matter, unless the damage inflicted is so mild that the sufferer cannot reasonably consider it meaningful.

2414 The Seventh Commandment outlaws the acts or companies which, for one reason or another, selfish or ideological, mercantile or totalitarian, lead to enslave human beings, to disparage their personal dignity, to buy them, to sell them and to change them as merchandise. It is a sin against the dignity of the people and their fundamental rights to reduce them by violence to the condition of consumption object or to a source of profit. Saint Paul ordered a Christian master to treat his Christian slave not as a slave, but... like a brother... in the Lord (LWF 16).

Respect for the integrity of creation

2415 The Seventh Commandment demands respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, such as plants and inanimate beings, are naturally destined for the common good of past, present and future humanity (cf. Gn 1, 28-31). The use of the mineral, vegetable and animal resources of the universe cannot be separated from respect for moral demands. The dominion granted by the Creator to man on inanimate beings and living beings is not absolute; it is regulated by the care of the quality of the neighbor's life, including that of future generations; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation (cf CA 37-38).

2416 Animals are creatures of God, who surround them with their providential request (cf Mt 6, 16). By their simple existence, they bless him and give him glory (cf Dn 3, 57-58). Men must appreciate them, too. Remember how delicately they treated the animals San Francisco de Assisi or San Philip Neri.

2417 God entrusted the animals to the administration of which he was created by him in his image (cf Gn 2, 19-20; 9, 1-4). It is therefore legitimate to use animals for food and clothing. They can be domesticated to help the man in his work and in his leisure. Medical and scientific experiments in animals, if kept in reasonable limits, are morally acceptable practices, as they contribute to caring for or saving human lives.

2418 It is contrary to human dignity to make suffer uselessly the animals and to sacrifice without necessity their lives. It is also unworthy to invest in them sums that should rather remedy the misery of men. You can love animals; but affection cannot be diverted to them because of human beings alone.