

Precepts of the Catholic Church

The *Precepts of the Catholic Church* are a description of the **absolute minimum** actions required of Catholics regarding the Church.

The Church uses these precepts to remind us that Christian life requires a commitment to prayer and active participation in the liturgy and sacraments. If we fall below this bare-minimum level, we cannot rightly consider ourselves to be in full communion with the Catholic Church.

Each of these precepts of the Catholic Church is a requirement. Together with the **Ten Commandments**, they represent the minimum level of moral living. Intentional violation of the precepts or the Commandments is a *grave matter*, meaning a mortal sin.

The Precepts

1. *You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.*

We must “sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord” (Sunday), as well as the principal feast days, known as Catholic holy days of obligation. This requires attending Mass, “and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days.”

2. *You shall confess your sins at least once a year.*

We must prepare for the Eucharist by means of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). This sacrament “continues Baptism’s work of conversion and forgiveness.”

3. *You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.*

This “guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord’s Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy.”

4. *You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.*

“The fourth precept ensures the times of self-discipline and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart.”

5. *You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.*

“The fifth precept means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability.”

(These quotations are from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in its section about the Precepts of the Catholic Church (#2041-3).)