



From the Pastor's Desk

I have been driving for more years than I care to admit. It seems that our driving habits have been a reflective microcosm of our inner attitudes as a whole. The more aggressive, intolerant and self-centered our driving becomes, the more we see the same happening in our society. Driving is a very personal behavior and can be a window to our inner self that can lead us to pursue a different “road” so to speak, in other areas of our lives. A few years ago, the Vatican issued an unusual document called: “Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of the Road,” which was nicknamed “Drivers’ Ten Commandments” by the media. The document extols the benefits of driving, but laments a host of ills associated with the automobile. The document warned of the effects of road rage, bringing out “primitive” behavior in motorists including “impoliteness, rude gestures, cursing, and blasphemy, loss of sense of responsibility, or deliberate infringement of the highway code”. Also included were drivers who use their cars to “show off”, and the easy opportunity to dominate others by speeding.

The document makes the point that driving has become a big part of contemporary life. There is a sad reality that driving has become our alter ego. We live out a different side of ourselves when we drive. Sometimes it’s just a reflection of who we really want to be. It becomes a means of power, domination, and sin.

Though we would have to term most of our driving sins as venial (or not serious), it has become apparent that even those “little sins” we commit while driving help to change us in the other areas of our lives. Over the years I have watched the rise and fall of national speed limits and how the rules of the road are followed. There does seem to be a direct correlation between disregard for the rules of the road and the rules for the greater good of society. It also seems that respect for fellow drivers, road workers, highway patrol and authority have declined in an almost the same way as respect in our community and society as a whole.

So, I do think I understand why the Vatican has issued these guidelines for drivers. Many seem like common sense, but we seem to be in short supply of that lately. So in case you missed them, here are those *Drivers’ Ten Commandments*.

1. *You shall not kill*
2. *The road shall be for you a means of communion between people and not of mortal harm.*
3. *Courtesy, uprightness and prudence will help you deal with unforeseen events.*
4. *Be charitable and help your neighbor in need, especially victims of accidents.*
5. *Cars shall not be for you an expression of power and domination, and an occasion of sin.*
6. *Charitably convince the young and not so young to not drive when they are not in a fitting condition to do so.*
7. *Support families of accident victims.*
8. *Bring guilty motorists and their victims together, at the appropriate time, so that they can undergo the liberating experience of forgiveness.*
9. *On the road, protect the more vulnerable party.*
10. *Feel responsible toward others.*

So, there you have them. It is also suggested that prayer might come in handy before driving, such as making the sign of the cross and saying the Rosary along the way. The Rosary was singled out in particular since its rhythm and gentle repetition does not distract the driver’s attention.

Drive safe. Drive defensively. Drive with God.

Fr. Fred Tomzik