

Driving with Goodwill

GOOD DRIVING is **virtuous driving**, especially by keeping the 4th, 5th and 7th Commandments.

This means more than **controlling the car** in all the vagaries of traffic, roads and weather. It means **controlling myself** in all my moods.

It means **driving with goodwill**.

Our secular society prides itself on its Godlessness and irreligion. It foolishly reduces morality to mere private opinion, without right or wrong. Nevertheless, its laws, especially its laws on driving, express the Ten Commandments, God's laws built-in to human nature, and written on human hearts. In compassion for our waywardness, God also wrote them on the stone tablets He delivered to Moses. Modern drivers expect other pagans to observe 4, 5 & 7. In this, at least, they uphold the **natural moral law**.

Without it, no society can operate fairly. Cicero, 106-43 B.C., an upright ancient pagan, knew it: see *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition*, p. 113. With God's actual graces, the ancient Greeks, too, knew that the 'good life' consists in the virtuous life.

HONOUR THY FATHER & THY MOTHER

The 4th Commandment requires us to **honour authority**, beginning with the parents who 'authored us', then beyond them to obey civil laws and rules:

Honour thy father and thy mother
that thy days may be long in the land
which the Lord thy God gives thee.

Exodus 20:12

This is the first commandment with a promise, a promise applicable to drivers, since the **road toll cuts short the days** of the road victims whose lives are cut off prematurely by death, or severely shortened by maiming or the hardships of debts from damages.

This 4th Commandment is the religious foundation for obeying a civil government:

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's
and to God the things that are God's.

Our Lord's own words, Matthew 22:21.

The Holy Name Pledge also asserts it:

I pledge my support for all lawful authority,
both civil and religious."

Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition, p. 97.

Today's young men and women often have their first brash with the police over breaking the road rules and smashing cars and causing death or injury. It never seems to have dawned on many of them that they will **be held responsible** for what they do, that speed-ing, drinking, inattention and disregard for others lead to gaol, fines, hospitals, morgues, cemeteries, plus court costs, lawyers, lost earnings, lost no claim bonuses.

Our pagan society prescribes long years of licence and spending power for adolescents, with too few duties, so that many are marking time in immaturity and irresponsibility. Indeed, some are going backwards.

Modern principles of upbringing, now forced on parents by media, academe and law, hinder road safety, and weaken family life and formation in goodwill.

THOU SHALT NOT KILL-5th Commandment

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL-7th Commandment

These are vital commandments for driving.

Their negativity, their saying NO, DON'T, runs counter to so much pop-psychology on which the citizens of our country have been raised. Saying NO is necessary, though it is certainly not sufficient. Saying NO is a practical ingredient for successful living: to **avoid evil is a high priority** — and where there is evil already, to avoid escalating it. *Primum non nocere*, "First, do no harm" — the surgeon's motto.

"Thou shalt not kill" includes "THOU SHALT NOT injure", and "Thou shalt not steal" includes "thou SHALT NOT DAMAGE". These are also weighty matters of morality, and binding under sin and with eternal consequences.

SELF-CONTROL

Conduct is built upon character, manners, customs, traditions, culture, morality, spirituality and religion.

Driving conduct is enhanced by religion. Unfortunately, it is possible to have a religion, indeed to believe it, and not to practise it. Examples abound, and surely we can recognize our own failings.

Controlling oneself can be very difficult. It is made far more so if it was not insisted upon in childhood and adolescence. Its absence is socially painful, and most of all in grown-ups.

We are hindered in practising virtue by the effects of the original rebellion, pride and stubbornness of our first parents. Even those blessed with the sanctifying grace of Baptism and living by it have still to battle against the remnant effects of original sin which remain after Baptism. Life upon earth is a moral struggle.

FEAR: LEAST NOBLE OF GOOD MOTIVES

Fear of a radar trap helps us heed the speed limit. Fear of the breathalyser prompts sobriety. Fear of accidents prompts **defensive driving** and 'putting safety first', with 100% attention, and thinking ahead.

Yet goodwill is far more noble. Goodwill "wills the good" — St Thomas Aquinas's definition of love.

BETTER ATTITUDES

Civil society now emphasizes driving attitudes as well as driving skills. Here, Catholics and other Christians offer the enrichment of God's message, "peace to men of goodwill", and aim to act on it by showing goodwill to others, for example, in family life, in the workplace, and in society generally.

Goodwill is expected of Christians, and much more of Catholics. The One True Church offers great sacramental graces and a rich and noble spirituality of virtues, responsibilities and happiness.

CLEVER NOT AS NOBLE AS VIRTUOUS

Some years ago, a Prime Minister said our future depended on the schools to build a clever country. Yet far more vital are the parents to build a virtuous country, with an upbringing conducive to goodwill.

PERSONAL CHOICE

When I drive a car, I choose between two basic outlooks founded in my attitudes for "driving my life".

I can either treat other road users as obstacles, or I can make it as pleasant as possible for them. Merely to raise the issue is to favour the nobler choice.

Driving a car is an interaction with others. Like flattery or camping, it brings out so starkly both the good traits of character and the awfully unpleasant.

GOODWILL VERSUS BAD WILL

Driving is an opportunity to practise many goodwill virtues: justice, charity, prudence, temperance, wisdom, compassion, and above all, that humility without which one cannot be a child in the Kingdom of God.

I must ask myself: "Is my driving notable for love of my neighbour for God's sake? loving my neighbour as Christ does? loving him as I love myself?"

Or is my driving marked by bad will? with aggression, reckless speed and selfishness?

To pose such questions opens up a new way of looking at things. For us Catholics, there is no alternative: driving a car demands our charity, as well as the justice of the Ten Commandments.

Do I drive as the **Good Samaritan** might have?

Or like an **evolutionist**, intent on my own *survival as the fittest*, meaning the fastest and most brutal?

In the most general terms, I should drive in such a way as to help other drivers reach their destinations.

Or do I only think of getting there myself, as quickly as I can — and too bad for everyone else?

Do I say, "The traffic was heavy," or "There were too many of us on the road"? Human solidarity, eh?

Am I considerate for other road users — even when they don't deserve it? Am I impatient towards other motorists and brutal with pedestrians.

It is this impatience that leads to accidents, or, more accurately, impatience leads to smashes, the mangling of metal and flesh, smashes which are not accidental at all. They are foreseeable and preventable, and the impatient are responsible and morally guilty.

DRIVING HUMBLY

A parable from a car itself — and from ships and trains — I need to equip my soul's bumper bars with spiritual shock absorbers — or fenders or buffers.

Human shock absorbers and fenders and buffers are called humility. Humility saves my worse self from taking offence too easily at what are merely pin-pricks to my pride.

I must not be 'prickly', or difficult to get on with, or always needing to be humoured...

And I can resolve to frown less and smile more.

GENEROSITY

Generosity is a vital for humility.

Do I forgive injuries and bear wrongs patiently — meaning the mistakes and aggressions of others?

Driving is my opportunity to exercise some of the Eight Beatitudes, and the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, and the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy.

HONESTY

Honesty is also vital for humility.

I should admit to myself that other people's mistakes may have been made in all goodwill. Or that I may have misjudged them, and their situation, and their intentions.

I must make allowance for others, for their hidden stresses, temptations, weaknesses, even when their sins impinge on me — such as their rudeness, injustice and impatience.

DRIVING PATIENTLY

Patience along with kindness is the key to charity.

The restrictions of speed limits, the restrictions of slow and incompetent drivers, pose a severe practical moral test for those suffering their hinderance.

The principle of moral theology, that in matters of life and death, the *safer course is to be followed*, is a guiding light to illuminate the many acts of patience I must make on every journey.

FLYING CARPET SYNDROME

Modern motor cars successfully pander to the human desire to travel effortlessly at whim — the flying carpet syndrome — yet the human heart is still unsatisfied and is often quite ungrateful. Like a miser with his money, who only wants more of the same.

EXTRAVAGANCE

Another aspect of modern motoring that has its own impact on morality is an absurd lack of proportion. It is disproportionate to use one and a half tons of machinery to transport seventy five kilograms of human being, a ratio of 20 to 1.

No wonder Tolkien could write disparagingly of "**the noise, stench, ruthlessness and extravagance of the internal combustion engine**" — in his *Tree and Leaf*, the essay on fantasy stories, written as far back as 1939, but ever so prophetic. The drivers of these vehicle often fail the moral test and foul the world with their own noise, stench, ruthlessness and extravagance.

THE CRUEL FACTS REMAIN

Brutality is on the increase in Australia and in our modern world: cruelty of all kinds, such as abortion, suicide, terrorism, assassinations, murderous driving, robbery under arms, bashing for self-fulfilment, rape, incest, drugs, drunkenness, hatred of parents, plus the 'civilized cruelties' like school sex education, self-worship and self-esteem psychology, and all the other abuses of the mind and body that set our course away from the good God's design of us and for us, namely our **dignity, duty and destiny**.

TV, an "improved means to deteriorated ends", too often promotes brutality, and becomes a seductive form of education for so many young and not so young people, all getting brainwashed subconsciously.

SOME FINAL GODLY ADVICE

"Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you" — and not as some of them actually do unto you.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those..."

And never drive without a prayer for all concerned.