

## *The Epiphany of the Lord*

<b>Exodus 20: 1 - 17</b> <b>VI. You shall not commit adultery</b>	<b>Deuteronomy 5: 6 - 21</b> <b>VI. You shall not commit adultery</b>
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### The Sixth Commandment

We have begun our look at the Sixth Commandment. The Catechism of the Catholic Church begins this section with a quote from Jesus given in his Sermon on the Mount: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (See Mt. 5:27-28)

This teaching from Jesus has some underlying presumptions. One presumption is that the Sixth Commandment refers to an actual physical relationship, usually with the consent of both parties. But, Jesus seems to refer something that does not involve a physical relationship nor the consent or even the awareness of the woman. So, what does Jesus mean by adultery in the heart? Section 2380 states, “Adultery refers to marital infidelity....Christ condemns even adultery of mere desire....The prophets see adultery as an image of the sin of idolatry.” From these statements we can try to find a new word or phrase for ‘adultery’ that will help us better to understand the nature of the sin being committed. Marital fidelity is the unity between a husband and a wife. The desire to destroy this unity through lustful desires is a sin. When adultery is defined as the destruction of marital unity, then adultery in the heart is the desire or the willingness to accept this destruction of unity for the sake of selfish pleasure. All forms of selfishness require worship of self, which is idolatry. Now we can understand the law of Moses that sentenced women caught in the act of adultery to death by stoning. However, Jesus does not condemn the woman caught in adultery. (See Jn 8:1-11) Do we have a different Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew than the Jesus in the Gospel of John? No! The Catechism teaches, “To form an equitable judgment about moral responsibility and to guide pastoral action, one must take into account the affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety, or other psychological or social factors that lessen, if not reduce to a minimum, moral culpability.” (See §2352) Jesus know the heart while we see the appearances. More next week about unity and division.