

Ask Fr James

Are the Precepts of the Church in the Bible and are they binding?

Yes the precepts of the church are all drawn from scriptures and are binding. Together with the Ten Commandments, they are required to be kept by all Catholics except one has legitimate reasons not to. The precepts are listed below:

1. *You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labour* (from Exodus 20: the Commandment #4 - keeping the Sabbath Day holy).
2. *You shall confess your sins at least once a year.* (from Letter of St. James 5:16 - Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed) and Jesus in John 20:23 gives the power of absolution to the first priests (his apostles) - "If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven").
3. *You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist especially during the Easter season* (from John 6:53 - Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you).
4. *You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church* - from Matthew 6:16-18 -When you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.
5. *You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church* - from 2Corinthians 9:6-7, Paul says: "whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And in 2Corinthians 8:1-12, St. Paul praised the generosity of the Macedonian church who although they were very poor, were very generous and Paul attributes this to the grace of God who had given them the willingness to give what little they had, and to do it with joy.
6. *To obey the laws of the Church concerning Matrimony.* The laws of the church concerning marriage are very clear from scriptures (Genesis 2, Matthew 5:27-28 and Matthew 19).
7. *To participate in the Church's mission of Evangelization of Souls.* Concerning Evangelization by all of Christ's faithful, we rely on Matthew 28:19 where Jesus said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This is the mission of the whole church and not just a job for priests and nuns.

These precepts are found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (CCC #2041-3). Note that the precepts of the Catholic Church are the *minimum* levels of participation in the life of the Church required of all Catholics but out of love for Christ and a desire to advance one's spiritual life, we are required to try to do far more.