

## **TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR DRIVERS**

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Everyday we read about accidents on the road in the newspapers. Many accidents are fatal. Comparing the number of vehicles, there are more accidents on the roads in India than in other countries! Similarly in comparison there are more accidents in Gujarat than in other states! Most accidents happen because of carelessness of the drivers or their lack of proper qualifications. The lack of regular maintenance of the vehicles also leads to accidents.

I see that most drivers do not hesitate to break the rules and regulations of driving. I usually leave my residence at 8 A.M. to go to my office. Early morning when I stop my jeep at a red light not only the drivers behind me but also the pedestrians tell me, “Sir, go ahead, there is no police around.” Are the rules of driving to be followed only when the police personnel are around?

Seeing the way many people driving on the road I feel that the road rules are not for them but for the police to keep them! It is another matter that even the police are caught in breaking the rules! I see that most drivers break the rules of driving easily when there are no policemen around to catch them. Then, when an accident happens, they say that it is fate, which they cannot help. They thus disown their own personnel responsibility for the accidents caused by them!

When there are police personnel at places like crossroads, railway crossing and busy junctions, the drivers behave smartly and observe the rules of driving! But when there are no policemen or policewomen, the red light or no red light, rules or no rules, the drivers make no differences; they simply drive ahead! It is a miracle that there are not too many accidents even in such lawlessness on the road! Often the drivers are just one step ahead of Yamadev, the god of death!

There is a Parsi proverb, which says, “Let us not go to god’s house without an invitation!” When I see some people driving I feel that they are in a great hurry to reach the house of the Yamadev even without an invitation! They drive their vehicle as if they are piloting a plane in super-sonic speed!

Some drivers break all rules of highways and expressways and drive their vehicle at breakneck speed on any lane and overtake from any side of the vehicle ahead of them! Such drivers often cause fatal accidents. According to the statistics of UNICEF, every year more than 1.2 lakh people die on road accidents in the whole world and leave more than 5 lakh people wounded and often crippled for life!

In this context let us listen to Vatican, which is considered the voice of conscience or the keeper of ethical and moral values. Vatican speaks to the drivers around the world. Vatican, as you may know, is the smallest country. The Pope who is the spiritual leader of Catholic Christians in the whole world is also the head of Vatican state. But not only the Christians but also the believers of all religions and even the non-believers pay heed to what the Pope say as the supreme spiritual leader. That is why the Vatican documents on the ten commandments for drivers merit our attention.

The accidents on the roads all over the world are on the increase. Taking this fact into consideration Vatican has issued the ten commandments for drivers. Specifically the ten commandments are issued by Pope's special council called Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant people. The Vatican document with the ten commandments published on June 19, 2007 is signed not by Pope Benedict XVI but by the chairperson of the Council, Cardinal Renato Martino.

The book of 'Exodus' in the Bible speaks about the ten commandments given by God through Moses to the Israelite people. These ten commandments are the moral and ethical foundation of Jewish and Christian religions. In it the fifth commandment says, 'Do not kill. Recalling and referring to the ten commandments of the Bible, Vatican has come out with the ten commandments for the drivers,

The ten commandments listed in the Vatican document are:

1. You shall not kill.
2. The road shall be for you a means of communication between people and not for mortal harm.
3. Courtesy, uprightness and prudence will help you to deal with unforeseen events.
4. Be charitable and help your neighbour 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 not to drive when they are not in a fitting condition to do so.
7. Support the families of the 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 for others.

Along with these ten commandments for drivers, the Vatican document speaks about many more related things.

In it I am touched by one thing. Last June I visited Canada, USA and Switzerland. A lot more vehicles run on the roads of Europe and America. It is rare to see people walking on the roads. But if a driver sees someone about to crossing the road, then she/he would inevitably stop the vehicle giving way to the pedestrians. He/she will start his/her car or other vehicle only after the pedestrian has fully crossed the road and is safe on the opposite side. The Vatican document instructs the drivers to take special care of the pedestrians using the roads. Actually this instruction about taking care of the pedestrians apply more to the Indian drivers than the European or American drivers. But how many of the drivers of our great India, in their great pride of owning a car, will care to stop their vehicle for the benefit of the pedestrians?

The Vatican document exhorts the drivers to desist from uncouth behaviour, rude demonstration and from cursing and insulting conduct. The 36-page document asks the drivers to take personal responsibility for not indulging in intoxicating drinks and drugs. The drivers are also asked to keep themselves away from getting angry on the road. The document further enjoins the drivers to observe speed limit and other signs and instructions on the road.

The Vatican document has also enlisted the advantages of driving a motor vehicle. Driving a vehicle one can reach fast one's place of work. One can also use one's vehicle to transport a sick person to a hospital. One can also travel to distant lands to learn about new culture, etc.

We can know a lot about the characteristics of a driver by observing the way she/he drives a vehicle. A driver, who holds precious the lives of people and all other living beings, will respect them. A driver who is led by the voice of his/her conscience, will drive the vehicle carefully even when there is no one watching him/her.

Today the number of vehicles is steadily increasing on our roads. Many people buy and drive motor cars not for their utility but for show and prestige. They buy the latest model of motor cars not for their usefulness but for display their wealth. Some drivers also misuse their cars for transporting prohibited items like liquor and drugs. The number of people who drink and drive their vehicle dangerously is also on the increase.

In these situation the Vatican document on ten commandments for drivers is both very relevant and the need of the hour. We can keep away from thousands of possible accidents by observing ten commandments for drivers while driving. Thus we will escape from lakhs of death on the road. (contact the author: [ciss@satyam.net.in](mailto:ciss@satyam.net.in))

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