

❖ **Question**

Dear Deacon Jim,

I read in a Catholic booklet a warning not to gossip because it is a sin. Gossip isn't one of the Ten Commandments. Why is gossip a sin?

❖ **Response**

That Catholic booklet was right on point warning that one should not gossip because it is indeed a sin. Although not specifically listed, gossip is a sin against the Eighth Commandment, **“you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”**. This is also treated as a sin against this commandment in The Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Gossip is considered a sin as it is idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal or private affairs of others. One of the most precious things a person has is their reputation which may even distract from the person's ability to interrelate with others and engage in human interaction. There also exists the introduction of errors and variations in the information transmitted when we gossip. So, it is very serious to harm the reputation of another which may cause even greater harm. St James says of the gossiping tongue: *Consider how a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell (James 3:11).*

When we dishonor a person by gossip, especially with the intent of harming their reputation, it can easily become a very serious sin.

Deacon Jim