

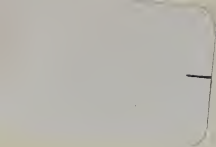
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# Thou shalt not Kill!



THE FIFTH  
COMMANDMENT





# THOU SHALT NOT KILL!

*The Fifth Commandment*

**With Discussion Club Outline**

*By*

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## THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

THE words of this commandment are found in the Book of Exodus (Exod. xx. 13). Like all the commandments the fifth commandment was given by Moses to the people of Israel. When our Lord came and taught the commandments, He explained very carefully that they governed not merely our deeds and words but our thoughts. And of this very commandment He said: "Of old it was told you—Thou shalt not kill. But I tell you that the man who thinks murder in his heart commits murder." Action follows thought. First we think, then we do. Christian morality means not only action control but thought control. When our Saviour spoke of the meaning of morality He insisted on the fact that it meant much more than the Pharisaic morality of the day. That morality concerned itself merely with the externals of life, words, deeds, attitudes. The morality taught by Christ is of the heart and mind first. Words and deeds follow.

The fifth commandment bids us preserve our own lives and the lives of others. It forbids unjust killing, wounding, mutilation, aggression. It also forbids hatred, revenge, anger for these sins often lead to violence and even murder. The fifth commandment proclaims the sacredness of life. Life is sacred because it is God-given. Man is given his life by the Creator. Man did not give it to himself. Neither may he take it from himself. He did not give it to others. He may not take it from others. God gives us all the use of our lives, not complete dominion over our lives. He alone has that. He gives it by creating us out of nothing. He alone may take it away.

This commandment tells me to use ordinary means in the preservation of my life. It does not bind me to use extraordinary means. By this commandment suicide is prohibited. And suicide means the deliberate taking of one's life by any means whatsoever. The act of self-killing which at times we

hear of by those who are afflicted by mental disorder is not suicide. If the mind is unbalanced it cannot make a sane judgment. And the will to self-destruction proceeding from such a judgment is not a responsible will. A soldier may place himself in a position of certain death, a doctor or priest may do the same in the service of the plague-stricken. This is not suicide. In fact it is the duty of the soldier, doctor and priest so to act.

## **The Hunger Strike**

From time to time there arises a query on the hunger strike. Is it or is it not suicide? Much has been written on this question. The best we can do is to strive to state the principles that should govern a hunger strike. Knowing the principles the next and most difficult thing to do is to apply them to a concrete case. The following principles are given by Father Davis, S.J. He holds them as self-evident:

1. No intention however good will make a bad action morally right. In the case of the hunger strike, it is of first importance to examine the means employed for we have to be careful to exclude motive when we are judging of means only.

2. The means employed are abstention from all food even to the point of actual death if necessary.

3. Such abstention will surely be justifiable if to take the proffered food would be sinful. This was so in the case of the Christian martyrs, for to take the food offered would have savored of apostasy and would have given great scandal.

4. In the modern hunger strike, if the imprisonment is just, the complete abstention from food would be immoral.

5. If the prisoner intends to starve till death and intends also that his death shall be the means of bringing deserved odium upon his enemies, it seems that he would intend first to inflict upon himself a great evil, namely death that it might serve as a means to a good end. This we think is morally wrong even when imprisonment is unjust.

6. If it is thought that there is a good chance of being freed from prison before death ensues, to refuse all food would be justifiable when the imprisonment is unjust, and when the good to be attained is commensurate with the bodily harm, short of death that is permitted. (*Moral and Pastoral Theology*, Vol. 2, p. 144.)

There may be, however, an instance in which the ulterior purpose of the striker is not to bring odium upon his enemies but to force his enemies to right a great wrong, for example, a wrong against a nation or a people. The odium is intended as a great moral force, the only force at hand to compel the righting of a great wrong. There is a probable opinion that the hunger striker would be right in this case.

If we accept these principles it follows that the hunger striker is not justified in carrying out his strike until death, nor is he justified in willing his death. He may go on strike if his imprisonment is not just, with one purpose in view. That purpose is to force the hand of the jailer to release him for fear that his death might follow. Or putting it into a dialogue the prisoner would say to the jailer: "I will starve myself to death unless you release me." That would be wrong for that would be suicide. The prisoner has no right to throw away his life for his life is God's not his. However, if he refuses food from the time he enters prison, knowing that his imprisonment is unjust and declares to himself: "I will take no food for as long a time as possible, hoping that my hunger strike will force my jailer to free me." This is right. For the prisoner is prepared to take food when the danger of death is imminent. The prisoner is justified in the fact of an unjust imprisonment in undergoing the extremes of hunger until those extremes bring him release. He is not justified in saying from the beginning of his strike: "I will starve myself to death in order to bring discredit on my jailer who has imprisoned me unjustly."

### **Suicide**

Suicide means deliberately seeking death. It does not mean risking life or facing what is almost certain death in a



good cause. A fireman rushing into a burning building may calculate that his death, short of a miracle, will be certain. But he wishes to rescue a helpless child. He is sure that the child will be saved and almost as certain that he will die of the effects of flame and smoke. His purpose is to save the child and permit his own death.

In the above-mentioned volume Father Davis gives the following instance: If a man jumps out of a boat in order to commit suicide, we shall say that the first effect of his jumping into the water is to lighten the boat, the second to place himself in the water, the third to drown. Why is it we defend another man who jumps out of a boat to certain death, in order to relieve the overloaded boat of his weight and to give others the chance of surviving? We defend his action, because the first effect the lightening of the boat was a good effect, intended in itself as an end or a means. Drowning was foreseen and permitted. In the first case the man intended his death and took the means; in the second case the man intended to lighten the boat and did so.

### **Self-Defense**

Suicide is always wrong. Running the risk of certain death is not always wrong. At times it is a duty. At times it is heroic charity. Murder is always wrong. Killing another is not always wrong. At times and under certain circumstances it is right to kill. In fact it is a duty. Everyone has a right to self-defense when his life is threatened. If an assailant attacks my life I have the right to take his. For by his act he loses the right to life. If, however, disabling or wounding him is sufficient protection then I would sin against justice in killing. This same right may be exercised in defending the life of another who is unjustly attacked, or to defend valuable property or to protect a woman's honor.

In self-defense the assailant does not forfeit his life because his right to life is subservient to the right of the man who kills him. No. He forfeits his right to life because his unjust aggression may be resisted with all possible force. The man killing his unjust aggressor has in view his own life's



safety. The death of the assailant is permitted. The big idea is to save a life that is attacked. And of course the threat must be immediate. After a man is attacked and the attack repelled, it is not right to seek out the attacker and kill him.

The principles that justify self-defense even if the death of the attacker follows are these:

1. The aggression must be imminent or actual.
2. The damage anticipated must be very grave, such as loss of life, mutilation, loss of chastity, loss of property of great value. .
3. The act of self-defense must be the only resource at the moment.

## Duelling

Duelling cannot be defended as an act of self-defense. Duelling is a sin against the fifth commandment. It is a premeditated agreement to vindicate honor by risking one's life to take the life of another or to mutilate and wound another. It is against the Law of God. As personal honor can be appeased by other means, the man who takes part in a duel exposes his life without need and so invades God's dominion over life. Duelling derives from paganism. And yet it persisted during many centuries of Christian civilization, more prevalent in some countries than in others, more usual among certain classes of society than among others. So in every period of history we find it condemned by the Church. To make the condemnation clear the Church today excommunicates duelists themselves, those who give or accept a challenge to a duel, those who offer help or countenance the duel or who are deliberately present, or who do not as far as they can prevent the duel (Code of Canon Law, c. 2351). Those who are killed in a duel or in consequence of wounds received in a duel, are excluded from ecclesiastical burial and from solemn funeral rites. These penalties are relaxed if some sign of repentance was given before death (cc. 1240, 1241).

## Capital Punishment

As an individual has the right of self-defense even to the point of taking another's life, so has the State this same right. The State has the right over life and death in self-defense to the point of inflicting the death penalty. This right is backed up by both Jewish and Christian tradition. It is one question to decide whether capital punishment is attaining its purpose, whether it is worth-while or practical as a real deterrent to the criminal, and another question to decide whether the State has this right. People may say: "We do not like capital punishment for we consider it barbarous and no deterrent to crime." It is quite another thing to say: "I am against capital punishment because it is wrong." The fact is both God and the Church proclaim the right of the State to inflict capital punishment. So it is utterly false to hold that capital punishment is wrong, just as it is false to say self-defense is wrong even though it costs the death of another. Peace and the security of life and property must be safeguarded by the State. If capital punishment is necessary for this purpose the State has the authority to inflict it for God gives this authority to the State. Of course individual rights may not be violated in carrying out this right. Capital punishment may be inflicted only after due process of law. This means a fair trial in which the accused is presumed innocent until proved guilty. Each State may prescribe this process of law. No individual or group may do this. Even if there is positive proof of guilt no one has the right to execute unless appointed by the State for this duty. So lynch law is not law but it is murder. Every member of a mob that inflicts the death penalty on even the guiltiest criminal is a murderer. The right to do this belongs to the State and only to the State.

For fifty years the murder rate has been steadily rising in this country. Last year more than 12,000 persons were murdered. That means about one person every three-quarters of an hour. In 1890 the murder rate was 4.2 for every 100,000 persons. In 1939 the rate was 11. How does the Law meet

this problem? Does it enforce the death penalty on the murderer? The answer is that in the last five years out of 60,000 murderers only 672 paid the death penalty.

## War and Peace

Just before the outbreak of the present war Pius XII declared in his endeavor to prevent the conflict: "Everything is gained by peace; nothing is gained by war." The whole history of the Papacy is really a peace struggle. For war is the heritage of barbarism. Sherman's definition that war is hell comes very close to the truth. For hell is hatred and hatred makes war and continues war. So it is that the Church speaking through her Popes and Bishops has ever raised her voice against war. For war is one of the greatest of evils. Just as peace is one of the greatest of blessings. The Prince of Peace came at a time of world-peace and His angel-choir ushered in His reign with a hymn of peace. "Glory be to God in the high heavens, and peace on earth to men of good will."

Speaking at Mass in St. Peter's on November 24, 1940, Pius XII declared:

We have neglected nothing for peace between nations. We are conscious of being the Vicar of the King of Peace and We know that peace cannot be attained by the blood shed in battles but only by the Precious Blood shed on His Cross. We have obeyed the desire of Our heart and done Our utmost to establish that peace which has been disturbed for a long time and which now appears to be finally shattered, and to establish an equitable order founded on justice that stills the passions and the hatreds and the rancors of strife. An order which aims at securing for all nations tranquillity, security and the sources of prosperity, so that they may be enabled to fulfill the words of the Creator: "Be ye fruitful and multiply yourselves."

Since the outbreak of the conflict Our mind and heart have never ceased to pray for divine comfort and enlightenment. But the clash of weapons silenced Our voice. All these who are fighting each other are Our lambs. We love them all, they are all Our sons.



If Our voice seems not to be heard on earth it will be heard in heaven by the Father of Pity, by the God Who dominates the universe. To Him We direct Our prayer. To Him We raise the cry of Our heart and of Our sorrow, praying for better times for mankind, better sunrises and better sunsets in Our days: *Give peace O Lord in Our days.*

On Christmas Eve addressing the College of Cardinals, Pope Pius XII emphasized the fact that the peace we pray for must be a peace that will bring about a new order in the world now at war:

From the impassioned polemics of warring factions concerning the objectives of the war and the ultimate peace settlements, there emerges, ever more clearly defined, the quasi-universal opinion which contends that pre-war Europe as well as its political structure are now undergoing a process of transformation of such nature as to signal the dawn of a new era.

Europe and its system of States, it is said, will not be as they were before. Something new and better, more evolved organically, sounder, freer and stronger, must replace the past in order to eliminate its defects, its weaknesses and its deficiencies, which are said to have been disclosed convincingly by recent events.

In the midst of the contrasting systems which are part of Our times and dependent upon them, the Church cannot be called upon to favor one more than another. In the orbit of universal value the divine law, whose authority obliges not only individuals but nations as well, there is ample room and liberty of action for the most varied forms of political opinion; whilst the practical application of one political system or another depends in a large measure and often quite decisively upon circumstances and causes which considered in themselves are extraneous to the purpose and action of the Church.

As protectress and herald of the principles of faith and morals, it is her sole interest, her sole longing, to convey through educational and religious channels to all peoples without exception the clear waters of the

fountains of Our patrimony and values of Christian life, in order that every people in its own peculiar way may enjoy Christian fellowship, Christian ethical-religious impulses to establish a society that would be humanly praiseworthy and spiritually elevated and a source of genuine good.

### **For a New Order**

Indispensable prerequisites for the search for a new order are:

1. Triumph over hate, which is today a cause of division among peoples; renunciation therefore of the systems and practices from which hate constantly receives added nourishment.

2. Triumph over mistrust, which bears down as a depressing weight on international law and renders impossible the realization of any sincere agreement.

3. Triumph over the distressing principles that utility is a basis of law and right, and that might makes right: a principle which makes all international relations liable to fall.

4. Triumph over those germs of conflict which consist in two-sided differences in the field of world economy; hence progressive action, balanced by correspondent degrees, to arrive at arrangements which would give to every State the medium necessary for insuring the proper standard of living for its own citizens of every rank.

5. Triumph over the spirit of cold egoism which, fearless in its might, easily leads to violation not only of the honor and sovereignty of States but of the righteous, wholesome and disciplined liberty of citizens as well.

It must be supplanted by sincere juridical and economic solidarity, fraternal collaboration in accordance with the precepts of Divine law amongst peoples assured of their autonomy and independence.

As long as the rumble of armaments continues in the stark reality of this war, it is scarcely possible to expect any definite acts in the direction of the restoration of morally, juridically imprescriptible rights.

But it would be well to wish that henceforth a declaration of principle in favor of their recognition may be given, to calm the agitation and bitterness of so many who feel that they are menaced or injured in their very existence or in the free development of their activity.

We express Our heartfelt wish that humanity and those who will show it the way along which it is to move forward will be sufficiently matured intellectually and capable in action to prepare the ground of the future for the new order that will be *solid, true* and *just*.

We pray God that it may so happen!

### **Pacifism**

It would appear that the Catholic Church is pacifist. It is not. Pacifism holds that war is always wrong and no one should have any part in it. The Catholic Church teaches that war is an evil but an evil that may be tolerated or even necessary under given conditions. Indeed Catholic theologians in explaining the teaching of the Church have traditionally held that war may be a right or even a duty. And they have gone farther than this statement. For they have put down the conditions for a just war. And in doing so theologians draw a line between two separate questions. The first is the right to begin a war, the next is the manner of waging the war that has begun.

When may war be justified? When self-defense is justified. For the State has the same right of self-defense as the individual. As an independent society the State has the right of preserving its life and its rights, and war may be the only way of doing this. Then it is both the right and duty of the State to wage war. The State *itself* must declare war. It must be the last resort. Discussion and arbitration must precede, and only when these fail is war just. There must be moreover a serious and just reason for the act of war, and the State must have a right motive which is expressed by saying that the good achieved will far outbalance the evil suffered.

It is not enough, however, for the cause to be just. The manner of waging war must be just. The two traditional



principles that govern the war method are that the civilian may not be the object of direct attack and that there should be no hate-propaganda. For example when Campion was captured in the days of Elizabeth the first words said to him by his captors were bristling with hate. Campion replied to them: "Come gentlemen let's be decent enemies." That expresses the moral principle underlying warfare. The enemy who is the unjust aggressor is not hated. His unjust aggression is hated and fought against.

There is no better statement on the causes for a just war than our own Declaration of Independence. In this great document the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, first announced the Catholic doctrine of human rights, natural rights given by God to man. There was a bill of indictment drawn up against the King and people of England for a long continued series of abuses against these rights. There followed the important statement:

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms. Our repeated petitions have been answered by repeated injury. A prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. . . . We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity. . . . They, too, have been deaf to the voice of justice. . . . We must therefore hold them as we hold the rest of mankind enemies in war, in peace friends.

War did not follow immediately upon the first few injustices worked upon the Colonies by the home government. No. War followed after repeated protests were ignored. And if ever there was a just war, our American Revolution was one.

It is the desire of everybody to have peace. It is God's plan that the nations of the world should live in peace. But peace means more than the absence of war. The pacifist is so occupied with the horrors of war that he mistakenly believes that in its absence the world will be at peace. If violence,

pride and passion rule the hearts of men, how can there be peace? Peace means the tranquillity of order, as St. Augustine said centuries ago. And order means justice, total justice linked with charity. The nation that battles against the totalism of wrong must be a nation that lives for the totalism of right. It cannot hold the sword of righteousness against an aggressor unless it wields the scepter of full justice over every individual and class within its own national sphere. That is why the Pope is ever speaking of a peace with justice. For any other peace is no peace. What we need is the peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ which is the kingdom of charity. All the treaties in the world, all the leagues in the world will never bring peace. They have been tried for centuries and they have failed. Peace must be in the mind and heart of man and that peace must be the peace of Christ.

Archbishop Spellman addressing the last convention of the American Legion clearly pointed the *one* way to peace:

It is better to have protection and not need it than to need protection and not have it. We Americans want peace, and it is now evident that we must be prepared to demand it. For other peoples have wanted peace, and the peace they received was the peace of death. Our good will and the sincerity of our desire for peace have been demonstrated to the extent of sinking our own battleships. We can no longer afford to be moles who cannot see, or ostriches who will not see, for some solemn agreements are no longer sacred, and vices have become virtues and truth a synonym of falsehood. We Americans want peace, and we shall prepare for peace, but not for a peace whose dilemmatic definition is slavery or death.

Valuable as are our material possessions, more precious still are our liberties. For these blessings of a higher kind no less than for our national wealth are we indebted to God. This truth was forcefully enunciated by the Catholic bishops of the United States assembled in the Third Council of Baltimore in the year 1837: "We consider the establishment of our country's independence," the bishops said, "the shaping of its

liberties and laws, as a work of special Providence, its framers building better than they knew, the Almighty's hand guiding them. We believe that our country's heroes were the instruments of the God of nations in establishing this house of freedom."

These are impressive thoughts prompting gratitude to God and a deeper appreciation of our inherited liberties. For religion, which traces the sources of all our blessings to a divine Author, has always added its force to patriotism when our Government has summoned our citizens to the country's defense so that those who have sprung up at the call have felt themselves doubly inspired and doubly armed.

By vocation I am a man of peace. I am consecrated to Christ, the Prince of Peace. Unceasingly, day and night, I pray and I ask my flock to pray for peace. "There is nothing to be gained by war that cannot be gained by peace," was the warning of Pope Pius XII on the eve of the outbreak of the present European conflict. I am a man of peace and I pray and hope and work for peace. Not knowingly would I injure anyone.

I am a man of peace, but gone is my hope of building a world safe for democracy on such foundations as the Treaty of Versailles. Vanished, too, is the mirage of many philanthropic optimists who cherished the vision of a world united in peace and fraternal charity beneath the aegis of science divorced from religion and around the altar of Godless education. Blasted is the dream of a communistic universal brotherhood—blasted by the tell-tale rattle of machine guns and the roar of cannon over Finland.

Science, knowledge, Communism, these three great hopes of men, these three great deified abstractions have wavered and failed beneath the pressure of human prejudice and selfishness and the spirit of cruelty and wickedness in high places. A great scientist, himself a refugee from the deification of race and blood, has stepped beyond his depth and suggested that mankind abandon belief in a personal God. That is just what men have done and are doing and the net result is written in the bomb-mangled bodies and the decreeshackled minds of Europe's suffering millions.



What is the answer? There is only one road to peace that I know of, the highroad of democracy, the road marked by the signposts of the Ten Commandments, the road back to Christ and His teachings, in personal life, in national life, and in international life.

This is the road to peace. This is the road for America to take. This is the road our forefathers took when they lived and died for our national independence. This is the road you and your comrades took when they lived and died for the national independence of other countries. This is the road that we shall travel if we are to live in peace, a government of the people, by the people, for the people.

May God bless the United States of America.

### **Mutilation**

It is a violation of the fifth commandment to mutilate the body unless such mutilation is necessary for health or for life. As man has not complete dominion over his life neither has he complete dominion over his body. The members of his body are not his to dispose of at will. They are to be kept in their integrity to help him fulfill his destiny. As life is more important than the body a member of the body may be taken to preserve life.

A question very much to the fore today is the sterilization of criminals and defectives. Needless to say this means mutilating the human body. It is a surgical operation. The purpose of the operation is to prevent propagation. Hence the name. It is advocated on three different grounds, therapeutic, eugenic and punitive. Therapeutic means "having healing qualities." Eugenics means "the science or art of improving offspring especially of the human race." And punitive means a way of punishment.

Advocates of eugenic sterilization have the welfare of the State in view. They wish to prevent the propagation of the unfit, and so lessen or entirely do away with disease, misery and crime in future generations. In the line of self-defense the State wants healthy citizens. The State whose object is the human welfare and happiness of its citizens must see to it

that health is secured as far as is possible. All this is true. But to secure these very good ends, health and happiness, the State cannot use wrong means. The right of the State over the citizen is not absolute. It is a restricted right. The citizen is not the property of the State. He is not the slave of the State. Man has rights because he is man and created by God. God in creating man gives him inalienable human rights. These human rights the State is bound to respect. Only for a crime may man be punished by the State. The defective is not a criminal. The unfit has done no wrong. What the State has a right to do is to segregate those whose bodily and mental condition make them a danger to others, to themselves, and in consequence to the general welfare. The State has this right. But unless for crime the State has no right to sterilize any citizen. Sterilization of defectives is wrong because it is not necessary, it is an excessive punishment of innocent citizens, and an unjust invasion of human rights. Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *On Christian Marriage* speaks as follows on sterilization:

Finally, that pernicious practice must be condemned which closely touches upon the natural right of man to enter matrimony but affects also in a real way the welfare of the offspring. For there are some who oversolicitous for the cause of eugenics, not only give salutary counsel for more certainly procuring the strength and health of the future child—which, in deed, is not contrary to right reason—but put eugenics before aims of a higher order, and by public authority wish to prevent from marrying all those whom, even though naturally fit for marriage, they consider, according to the norms and conjectures of their investigations, would, through hereditary transmission, bring forth defective offspring. And more, they wish to legislate to deprive these of that natural faculty by medical action despite their unwillingness; and this they do not propose as an infliction of grave punishment under the authority of the State for a crime committed, nor to prevent future crimes by guilty persons, but against every right and good they wish the civil authority to arrogate to itself

a power over a faculty which it never had and can never legitimately possess.

Those who act in this way are at fault in losing sight of the fact that the family is more sacred than the State and that men are begotten not for the earth and for time, but for Heaven and eternity. Although often these individuals are to be dissuaded from entering into matrimony, certainly it is wrong to brand men with the stigma of crime because they contract marriage, on the ground that, despite the fact that they are in every respect capable of matrimony, they will give birth only to defective children, even though they use all care and diligence.

Public magistrates have no direct power over the bodies of their subjects; therefore, where no crime has taken place and there is no cause present for grave punishment, they can never directly harm, or tamper with the integrity of the body, either for the reasons of eugenics or for any other reason. St. Thomas teaches this when, inquiring whether human judges for the sake of preventing future evils can inflict punishment, he admits that the power indeed exists as regards certain other forms of evil, but justly and properly denies it as regards the maiming of the body. "No one who is guiltless may be punished by a human tribunal either by flogging to death, or mutilation, or by beating."

Furthermore, Christian doctrine establishes, and the light of human reason makes it most clear, that private individuals have no other power over the members of their bodies than that which pertains to their natural ends; and they are not free to destroy or mutilate their members, or in any other way render themselves unfit for their natural functions, except when no other provision can be made for the good of the whole body.

### **Abortion**

Abortion is murder. It is taking an innocent life unable to defend itself. It is a plain violation of the fifth commandment. As soon as God creates the soul in the human embryo there is in the mother's womb a human life. That human life is entitled to all human rights. Normally it can-

not live outside the womb before the seventh month is completed. There have been exceptional cases where life has been preserved shortly after the sixth month. Abortion means expelling the human fetus from the womb in any manner whatever, knowing that death will follow. This is direct killing. This is always immoral. Even if it is the only means of saving the life of the mother it is against God's Law. Mother and child have a right to life. Neither has a better right than the other. Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *On Christian Marriage* calls abortion the *murder* of the *innocents*:

But another very grave crime is to be noted, Venerable Brethren, which regards the taking of the life of the offspring hidden in the mother's womb. Some wish it to be allowed and left to the will of the father or the mother; others say it is unlawful unless there are weighty reasons which they call by the name of medical, social, or eugenic "indication." Because this matter falls under the penal laws of the State by which the destruction of the offspring begotten but unborn is forbidden, these people demand that the "indication," which in one form or another they defend, be recognized as such by the public law and in no way penalized. There are those, moreover, who ask that the public authorities provide aid for these death-dealing operations, a thing which, sad to say, everyone knows is of very frequent occurrence in some places.

As to the "medical and therapeutic indication" to which, using their own words, we have made reference, Venerable Brethren, however much we may pity the mother whose health and even life is gravely imperiled in the performance of the duty allotted to her by nature, nevertheless what could ever be a sufficient reason for excusing in any way the direct murder of the innocent? This is precisely what we are dealing with here. Whether inflicted upon the mother or upon the child, it is against the precept of God and the law of nature: "Thou shalt not kill": The life of each is equally sacred, and no one has the power, not even the public authority, to destroy it. It is of no use to appeal to the right of taking away life for here it is a question of



the innocent, whereas that right has regard only to the guilty; nor is there here question of defense by bloodshed against an unjust aggressor (for who would call an innocent child an unjust aggressor?); again there is no question here of what is called the "law of extreme necessity" which could even extend to the direct killing of the innocent. Upright and skillful doctors strive most praiseworthily to guard and preserve the lives of both mother and child; on the contrary, those show themselves most unworthy of the noble medical profession who encompass the death of one or the other, through a pretense at practicing medicine or through motives of misguided pity.

All of which agrees with the stern words of the Bishop of Hippo in denouncing those wicked parents who seek to remain childless, and failing in this, are not ashamed to put their offspring to death: "Sometimes this lustful cruelty or cruel lust goes so far as to seek to procure a baneful sterility, and if this fails the fetus conceived in the womb is in one way or another smothered or evacuated, in the desire to destroy the offspring before it has life, or if it already lives in the womb, to kill it before it is born. If both man and woman are party to such practices they are not spouses at all; and if from the first they have carried on thus they have come together not for honest wedlock, but for impure gratification; if both are not party to these deeds, I make bold to say that either the one makes herself a mistress of the husband, or the other simply the paramour of his wife."

What is asserted in favor of the social and eugenic "indication" may and must be accepted, provided lawful and upright methods are employed within the proper limits; but to wish to put forward reasons based upon them for the killing of the innocent is unthinkable and contrary to the divine precept promulgated in the words of the Apostle: Evil is not to be done that good may come of it.

Those who hold the reins of government should not forget that it is the duty of public authority by appropriate laws and sanctions to defend the lives of the innocent, and this all the more so since those whose lives

are endangered and assailed cannot defend themselves. Among whom we must mention in the first place infants hidden in the mother's womb. And if the public magistrates not only do not defend them, but by their laws and ordinances betray them to death at the hands of doctors or of others, let them remember that God is the Judge and Avenger of innocent blood which cries from earth to Heaven.

### **Mercy Killing**

Mercy killing is a revival of a pagan practice. It advocates the killing of a patient suffering from an incurable disease and in great pain. We have for example The Euthanasia Society of America that recently advocated the establishment of a Euthanasia Commission in New York State. Its purpose would be to legalize the killing of aged and incurable citizens of the State. The Euthanasia Society declares its position as follows:

In accordance with the Golden Rule . . . we believe that it is both fair and decent to offer the boon of a quick and peaceful passage to those who know the end is near, and wish to terminate the useless and unnecessary prolongation of a life already run out.

The Golden Rule is golden only in so far as it stems from God's Law. And one plain statement of that Law is: *Thou shalt not kill.*

### **Positive Scope of the Commandment**

The Catechism of the Council of Trent emphasizes the fact that the fifth commandment like all the commandments implies positive action. Our Lord makes this very clear in His Sermon on the Mount: "For I tell you that unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and the Pharisees you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother

shall be in danger of the judgment. . . . If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift" (Matt. v. 20-24).

In reality this commandment enjoins the duty of charity toward all men without exception. As hatred is clearly forbidden by this commandment for "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John iii. 15), it is plain that the commandment inculcates charity and love for fellow man. In fact the commandment obliges us to all the good offices and duties that follow in the path of charity so beautifully expressed by St. Paul in his letter to the people of Corinth:

Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, deal-eth not perversely, is not puffed up. Is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil. Rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth with the truth. Doeth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never falleth away whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease or knowledge shall be destroyed (1 Cor. xiii. 4-9).

Because charity is kind, beneficence is its companion. The virtue of beneficence has a wide sweep. Its main offices are to relieve the needs of the poor, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked. In a word, all the corporal works of mercy. And our Lord commands us to rise to greater heights and include among our beneficiaries the enemy: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you" (Matt. v. 44). And St. Paul in still greater detail enjoins us: "If thine enemy be hungry give him to eat; if he thirst give him to drink. For doing this thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome by evil but overcome evil by good" (Rom. xii. 20).

The most important duty of all is the forgiveness of injuries. The Holy Scriptures constantly urge us to the fulfillment of this duty. They call men blessed who do this, and

assure us that God grants pardon to the forgiving heart and refuses forgiveness to the unforgiving. The fact is that whatever injustices or injuries come to us in this life really come from the hand of God, the Father and Author of all justice and mercy. He permits them for our ultimate good. As Job, the great man of patience said when he was outraged by the Sabeans, Chaldeans and by Satan: "The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job i. 21).

### **Sin of Scandal**

The sins of the heart forbidden by this commandment are anger, envy and hatred. The sins of the tongue forbidden are contentions, quarrelsome and injurious words. But there is a species of murder forbidden and that is murder of the soul, scandal. For he who scandalizes his fellow man by leading him into sin, kills the soul. Scandal is any word or deed that leads another into spiritual ruin.

The sin of deliberate scandal is a mortal sin. In an old English catechism by Bishop Hay the following reasons are given for the seriousness of this sin:

1. It is murder of the soul which is so much more grievous before God, as the soul is more precious than the body, and as the death of the soul is more dreadful than that of the body. If murder of the body cries to heaven for vengeance what must murder of the soul do?

2. It is a most grievous sin because it generally arises from malignant envy. So Holy Scripture puts on the lips of those who give scandal these words: "Let us lie in wait for the just because he is not for our turn, and he is contrary to our doings. . . . He is become a censurer of our thoughts; he is grievous unto us even to behold, for his life is not like other men's and his ways are very different" (Wisd. ii. 12). Envy prompts the scandalgiver to lead the just into sin.

3. It is a diabolical vice and proves those guilty of it to be instruments and agents of the devil. Our Lord Himself declares those who give scandal to be chil-



dren of the devil: "You are of your father the devil and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning" (John viii. 44). He is the first murderer of souls.

4. It is the greatest injury done to our Saviour because it robs Him of those souls for which He shed His Precious Blood; it defeats as far as possible the end for which Christ came into the world: it is an open espousing of the interests of Satan in opposition to God.

5. The most dreadful consequences are foretold by Christ Himself for those who are guilty of it: "Woe to the world because of scandals, for it must needs be that scandals come, but nevertheless woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh. He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. xviii. 6). And to the Pharisees He said: "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you yourselves do not enter in, and those that are going in you suffer not to enter" (Matt. xxiii. 13).

### **Summary**

Human life is sacred because it comes from God. He alone has complete dominion over it because He is the Creator. The fifth commandment forbids any thought, word or deed that would destroy or injure human life. It also forbids hatred, revenge, anger as these sins often lead to violence or murder. We are bound by this commandment to use ordinary means for the preservation of our lives. Suicide which is a violation of this commandment means deliberately seeking death. It does not mean risking our lives for a worthy cause. A life may be taken in self-defense. And self-defense applies to a nation as well as to an individual. This means that war at times is just. It means, too, that the State has the right to inflict capital punishment. The attitude of the Church throughout history expressed by the Popes has always been against war. The Church however is not pacifist.

War as a last resort may be a necessary evil to be tolerated for a greater good. Pope Pius XII has clearly stated the Catholic attitude on peace and war. Mutilation by State authority unless as a punishment for a serious crime is against this commandment. Pope Pius XI makes this plain in his encyclical *On Christian Marriage*. Abortion is directly against this commandment and so is the sin of scandal.

# DISCUSSION CLUB QUESTIONNAIRE

## LESSON I

### Questions

(Pages 3 to 5)

Where do we find the words of the fifth commandment?

To whom was this commandment first given?

What did our Lord say of this commandment?

What control does Christian morality enjoin?

How does it differ from the morality of the Pharisee?

What does this commandment enjoin?

What does it forbid?

Why is human life sacred?

What is the difference between man's dominion over life and God's dominion?

What is God's title to His dominion over life?

Must I preserve my life by extraordinary means?

## LESSON II

### Questions

(Pages 5 to 7)

Enumerate the principles that govern the morality of the hunger strike.

Is the hunger striker justified in starving to death?

What purpose must the striker have in view that justifies his hunger strike?

Express in a sentence the right and wrong attitude toward the hunger strike.

Define suicide.

Is a mentally afflicted person who takes his own life guilty of suicide?

Is it suicide to place myself in danger of death when duty calls for this act?

Is risking death suicide? Explain your answer by an example.

May a man face almost certain drowning and yet not be guilty of suicide? Explain.

Is killing another always wrong?

What is the right of self-defense?

How does an assailant forfeit his right to life?

Name the principles justifying self-defense even to the extent of killing an attacker.

Is duelling against this commandment? Explain.

How does the Church regard duelling?

### **LESSON III**

#### **Questions**

(Pages 8 to 11)

Has the State the right to inflict capital punishment? Explain.



Where does the State get authority to inflict capital punishment?

Is this authority supported by any tradition?

If capital punishment is not a deterrent has the State the right to impose it?

May individual rights be violated by the State in carrying out capital punishment?

What is meant by due process of law?

May an individual or a group inflict capital punishment?

State the rise in the murder rate in this country for the last fifty years.

How frequently has the death penalty been carried out in the last five years?

What has been the attitude of the Popes throughout history in regard to war?

What did Pius XII say at the outbreak of the present war?

Explain Sherman's definition of war.

What is the sequel to war?

When will wars cease?

## **LESSON IV**

### **Questions**

(Pages 12 to 16)

Is the Catholic Church pacifist?

Define pacifism.

Is war ever right?

In discussing the right and wrong of war, what two questions have to be weighed?

Name the condition necessary for declaring war.

Is it enough to have a just cause in order to wage war?

What principles should govern the waging of war?

What part should hatred play in war?

How does the Declaration of Independence prove the American Revolution a just war?

Does peace mean the absence of war?

Explain St. Augustine's definition of peace.

Will treaties and agreements bring peace to the world?

How has America proved its desire for peace?

What peace are we preparing for?

Are we preparing merely to defend our material possessions?

What did the Bishops of the Third Council of Baltimore say of the founding of America?

May a man of peace sanction war?

How has religion affected patriotism in times of national peril?

Has science or education promoted peace?

What is the result of man abandoning belief in a personal God?

What is the only road to peace?

Summarize the Peace Statements of Pius XII.

## **LESSON V**

### **Questions**

(Pages 16 to 18)

Why is it unlawful to mutilate the human body?

What reason makes it lawful?

What are the three grounds on which sterilization is advocated?

What have the advocates of sterilization in view?

For the health of the body politic may the State sterilize the unfit?

What rights has the State over the unfit?

State three reasons against sterilization of defectives.

What do the advocates of sterilization lose sight of according to Pope Pius XI?

Are eugenic reasons sufficient for the State to destroy the integrity of the human body?

State the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas in this matter.

What is the sole reason for permitting any kind of bodily mutilation?

## **LESSON VI**

### **Questions**

(Pages 18 to 21)

Why is abortion murder?

Is not the mother's life more sacred than the life of the child in the womb?

Name the reasons noted by Pope Pius XI that are asserted to justify abortion.

How does the Pope reply to these reasons?

What does St. Augustine say of the sin of abortion?

What is the State's obligation in this matter?

What is meant by Mercy Killing?

What is the Euthanasia Society's position in this respect?

What is the Catholic answer?

## **LESSON VII**

### **Questions**

(Pages 21 to 23)

How does our Lord explain the positive aspect of this commandment?

What duty is enjoined upon all men by this commandment?

Prove that hatred is forbidden by this commandment.

How does the virtue of beneficence follow from charity?

State the Christian attitude toward enemies.

What does Scripture say about the forgiveness of injuries?

## **LESSON VIII**

### **Questions**

(Pages 23 to 25)

What is scandal and why is it forbidden by this commandment?



If murder calls to heaven for vengeance, what may be said of scandal?

What motive prompts the sin of scandal?

Prove that scandal is a diabolical sin.

Why does this sin inflict the greatest injury on our Saviour?

What does our Lord say of those who are guilty of this sin?



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