

LESSON THIRTY-THIRD.

FROM THE FOURTH TO THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

361 Q. What is the fourth Commandment?

A. The fourth Commandment is: Honor thy father and thy mother.

362 Q. What are we commanded by the fourth Commandment?

A. We are commanded by the fourth Commandment to honor, love, and obey our parents in all that is not sin.

“In all that is not sin,” because if our parents or superiors, being wicked, bid us do things that we know to be certainly sinful, then we must not obey them under any circumstances. God will not excuse us for doing wrong because we were commanded. But if, on the contrary, we are forced in spite of our resistance to do the sinful act, then not we but they have to answer for the sin. If, however, you simply doubt about the sinfulness of the act, then you must obey; because you must always suppose that your superiors know better than you the things that concern their duty. Even if they should be mistaken in the exercise of their authority, God will reward your obedience. Besides obeying them, you must also help and support your parents if they need your assistance. You must not scoff at or despise them for their want of learning or refinement, because they perhaps have made many sacrifices to give you the advantages of which they in their youth were deprived. Do we not sometimes find persons of pretended culture ignorantly slighting their plain-mannered parents, or showing that they are ashamed of them or unwilling to recognize them before others, ungratefully forgetting that whatever wealth or learning they themselves

have come through the love and kindness of these same parents? Again, is it not sinful for the children, especially of such parents, to waste their time in school, knowing that they are being supported in idleness by the hard toil and many sacrifices of a poor father? Never, then, be guilty of an unkind or ungrateful act. No matter who they are or what their condition, never forget those who have helped you and been your temporal or spiritual benefactors. If you cannot return the kindness to the one who helped you, at least be as ready as he was to do good to another. It is told of a great man that, wishing always to do good, he made it a rule never to stand looking at the effects of a disturbance, disaster, or accident unless he could do some good by being there.

Wherever you are, ask yourselves now and then, Why am I in this particular place; what good am I doing here?—etc. St. Aloysius when about to perform any action used to ask himself, it is said, What has this action to do with my eternal salvation? and St. Alphonsus de Liguori made a vow never to waste a moment of his time. These were some of the great heroes of the Church, and this is one of the reasons why they could accomplish so much for God.

363 Q. Are we bound to honor and obey others than our parents?

A. We are also bound to honor and obey our bishops, pastors, magistrates, teachers, and other lawful superiors.

“Magistrates”—that is, civil rulers, like the president, governor, mayor, judges, etc.

* 364 Q. Have parents and superiors any duties towards those who are under their charge?

A. It is the duty of parents and superiors to take good care of all under their charge and give them proper direction and example.

It is so much their duty that God will hold them responsible for it, and punish them for neglecting it; so that your

parents are not free to give you your own way. They have to do God's work, and, as His agents, punish you when you deserve it. You should take their punishment as coming from God Himself. They do not punish you because they wish to see you suffer, but for your good. Think of the terrible responsibility of parents. Let us suppose that the parents of a family give bad example; their children follow their example, and when they become heads of families their children also will grow up in wickedness; and thus we can go on for generations, and all those sins will be traced back to the first bad parents. What is true for bad example is true also for good example; that is, the good done by the children will all be traced back to the parents. Sometimes you may be punished when you are not guilty; then think of the times you were guilty and were not punished. Remember also how Our Lord was falsely accused before Herod and Pilate, and yet He never opened His lips to defend Himself, but suffered patiently. God sees your innocence and will reward you if you bear your trial patiently. Indeed, we are foolish not to bear all our sufferings patiently, for we have to bear them any way, and we might just as well have the reward that patient suffering will bring us. Those who suffer should find comfort in this: by suffering they are made more like Our Lord and His blessed Mother. She lived on earth over sixty years, and during all that time she seems never to have had any of those things that bring worldly pleasure and happiness. She was left an orphan when quite young, and spent her early life in the temple, which was for her a kind of school; then she was married to a poor old carpenter, and must have found it very hard at times to get a living. Our Lord was born while she was away from home in a strange place. After she had returned and had just settled down in her little dwelling, she had to fly with St. Joseph into Egypt to save the life of the little Infant Jesus, whom the king's officers were seeking to kill. In Egypt they were strangers, among people not of their own nationality or religion, and St. Joseph must have found great difficulty in providing for them; yet they had to

remain there for some time. Then when our divine Lord was grown to manhood and could be a great comfort to His Mother, He was seized and put to death in her presence. Her most beloved and innocent Son put to death publicly as a criminal before all her neighbors! The same persons who insulted Our Lord would not hesitate to insult and cruelly treat His blessed Mother also. At His death He left her no money or property for her support, but asked a friend, St. John, to receive her into his house and do Him the favor of taking care of her. She must have often felt that she was a burden in that man's house; that she had no home of her own, but was living like a poor woman on the charity of kind friends, for St. Joseph died before Our Lord's public life began. The blessed Mother was, however, obliged to remain upon earth for about eleven years after Our Lord's ascension. Thus we see her whole life was one of trials and sorrows. Now certainly Our Lord loved His Mother more than any other son could; and certainly also He, being God, could have made His blessed Mother a queen upon the earth, rich and powerful among men, and free from every suffering or inconvenience. If, then, He sent her sorrows and trials, it must have been because these were best for her, and because He knew that for this suffering here upon earth her happiness and glory in heaven would be much increased; and as He wished her to have all the happiness and glory she was capable of possessing, He permitted her to suffer. If, then, suffering was good for Our Lord's Mother, it is good also for us; and when it comes we ought not to complain, but bear it patiently, as she did, and ask Our Lord to give us that grace.

365 Q. What is forbidden by the fourth Commandment?

A. The fourth Commandment forbids all disobedience, contempt, and stubbornness towards our parents or lawful superiors.

"Contempt." Showing by our words or actions that we disregard or despise those placed over us. A man who is sum-

moned to appear in court and does not come is punished for "contempt of court," because he shows that he disregards the authority of the judge. A thing not very bad in itself may become very bad if done out of contempt. For example, there would be a great difference between eating a little more than the Church allows on a fast-day, simply because you were hungry, and eating it because you wanted to show that you despised the law of fasting and the authority of the Church. The first would be only a venial sin, but the latter mortal. So for all your actions. An act which in itself might be a venial sin could easily become a mortal sin if you did it through contempt. "**Stubbornness**"—that is, unwillingness to give in, even when you know you are wrong and should yield. Those who obey slowly and do what they are ordered in a sulky manner are also guilty of stubbornness.

366 Q. What is the fifth Commandment?

A. The fifth Commandment is: **Thou shalt not kill.**

367 Q. What are we commanded by the fifth Commandment?

A. We are commanded by the fifth Commandment to live in peace and union with our neighbor, to respect his rights, to seek his spiritual and bodily welfare, and to take proper care of our own life and health.

"**Proper care of our own life.**" It is not our property, but God's. He lends it to us and leaves it with us as long as He pleases: nor does He tell us how long He will let us have the use of it. Thus suicide, or the taking of one's own life, is a mortal sin, for by it we resist the will of God. One who in sound mind and full possession of reason causes his own death is guilty of suicide. But it is sometimes very difficult to determine whether the person was really sane at the time he committed the act; hence, when there is any reasonable doubt on that point, the unfortunate suicide is usually given the benefit of it. It is also a sin to risk our lives uselessly or to continue in any habit that we are sure is injuring our health and shortening our lives.

Thus an habitual drunkard is guilty of sin against the fifth

commandment, for besides his sin of drunkenness, he is hastening his own death. So, too, boys or girls who indulge in habits which their parents forbid are guilty of sin. For example, a boy is forbidden to smoke, and he does smoke. Now to smoke is not in itself a sin, but it becomes a sin for that boy, because in the first place he is disobedient, and secondly is injuring his health. Thus persons who indulge in sinful habits may commit more than one kind of sin, for besides the sins committed by the habits themselves, these vices may injure their health and bring sickness and disease upon their bodies.

368 Q. What is forbidden by the fifth Commandment?

A. The fifth Commandment forbids all wilful murder, fighting, anger, hatred, revenge, and bad example.

Therefore it forbids all that might lead to murder. So we can violate any of the commandments by doing anything that leads to breaking them. "Revenge" is a desire to injure others because they injured you.

369 Q. What is the sixth Commandment?

A. The sixth Commandment is: Thou shalt not commit adultery.

370 Q. What are we commanded by the sixth Commandment?

A. We are commanded by the sixth Commandment to be pure in thought and modest in all our looks, words, and actions.

We should be most careful about this commandment, because almost every violation of it is a mortal sin. For example, if you steal only a little, it is a venial sin; for in stealing the greatness of the sin will depend upon the amount you steal; but if you do a real bad action, or think a real bad thought against the sixth commandment, it will be a mortal sin, no matter how short the time. Again, we have more temptations against this commandment, for we are tempted by our own bodies and we cannot avoid them: hence the

necessity of being always guarded against this sin. It enters into our soul through our senses; they are, as it were, the doors of our soul. It enters by our eyes looking at bad objects or pictures; by our ears listening to bad conversation; by our tongue saying and repeating immodest words, etc. If, then, we guard all the doors of our soul, sin cannot enter. It would be foolish to lock all the doors in your house but one, for one will suffice to admit a thief, and we might as well leave them all open as one. So, too, we must guard all the senses; for sin can enter by one only as well as by all.

371 Q. What is forbidden by the sixth Commandment?

A. The sixth Commandment forbids all unchaste freedom with another's wife or husband: also all immodesty with ourselves or others in looks, dress, words, or actions.

372 Q. Does the sixth Commandment forbid the reading of bad and immodest books and newspapers?

A. The sixth Commandment does forbid the reading of bad and immodest books and newspapers.

Reading brings us into the company of those who wrote the book. Now we should be just as careful to avoid a bad book as a bad man, and even more so; for while we read we can stop to think, and read over again, so that bad words read will often make more impression upon us than bad words spoken to us. You should avoid not only bad, but useless books. You could not waste all your time with an idle man without becoming like him—an idler. So if you waste your time on useless books, your knowledge will be just like the books—useless. Many authors write only for the sake of money, and care little whether their book is good or bad, provided it sells well. How many young people have been ruined by bad books, and how many more by foolish books! Boys, for example, read in some worthless book of desperate deeds of highway robbery or piracy, and are at once filled with the desire to imitate the hero of the tale. Young girls, on the other hand, are equally infatuated by the wonderful fortunes and adventures of some young woman whose life has been

so vividly described in a trashy novel. As the result of such reading, young persons lose the true idea of virtue and valor, of true, noble manhood and womanhood, and with their hearts and minds corrupted set up vice for their model.

Again, these books are filled with such terrible lies and unlikely things that any sensible boy or girl should see their foolishness at once. Think, for example, of a book relating how two boys defeated and killed or captured several hundred Indians! Is that likely? The truth is, if two Indians shook their tomahawks at as many boys as you could crowd into this building, every single one of them would run for his life.

Let me give you still another reason for not reading trashy books. Your minds can hold just so much good or evil information, and if you fill them full of lies and nonsense you leave no room for true knowledge.

Do not, therefore, get into the habit of reading foolish story-papers and cheap novels. Read good books in which you can find information that will be useful to you all through your life.

If now and then you read story-books for amusement or rest from study, let them be good story-books, written by good authors. Ask some one's advice about the books you read—some one who is capable of giving such advice: your pastor, your teachers, and frequently your parents and friends. Learn all through your life to ask advice on every important matter. How many mistakes in life would have been prevented if those making them had only asked advice from the proper persons and followed it. Your parents have travelled the road of life before you. Now it is known to them and they can point out its dangers. To you the road is entirely new, and it will be only after you have travelled it and arrived nearly at its end in the latter days of your life that you also will be able to advise others how to pass through it in safety. This road can be travelled only once, so be advised by those who have learned its many dangers by their own experience. You should be very glad that those of experience are willing to teach you, and if you neglect their warnings you will be very sorry for it some day.