

THE COMMANDMENTS.

The Fifth Commandment (cont.):

Thou shalt not kill.

Scandal. Bad example.

- 1.** The Fifth Commandment also forbids giving of *scandal*.
- 2.** By *scandal* is meant any word, act or omission (whether actually wicked or only seemingly so does not matter) designed or likely to cause another person to fall into sin.
- 3.** The most potent causes of scandal are (1) language contrary to religion, charity or purity, (2) bad example, and (3) advice calculated to lead one's neighbour into sin or to turn him away from virtue.
- 4.** We *scandalize* (give scandal to) our neighbour by putting in his way irreligious or immoral literature, and, what is even worse, by writing or publishing such literature.
- 5.** It is a grievous sin to give scandal, for the result is often the loss of a soul whom Our Lord shed His precious blood to redeem. And then not unfrequently scandal, once given, is irreparable.
- 6.** There are however some people who, deliberately putting a bad meaning on absolutely harmless words and acts, pretend to be scandalized thereby. Such were the Pharisees who saw evil in the most blameless things uttered or done by Our Lord and His apostles, as the two following extracts from the Gospel of St Mark will show.

« John answered Him, saying: « Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, who followeth not us, and we forbad him. » But Jesus said: « Do not forbid him. For there is no man that doth a miracle in My name, and can soon speak ill of me. For he that is not against you is for you. For whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of water in My name, because you belong to Christ, Amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.

And whosoever shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed than, having two hands, to go into hell, into unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting than, having two feet, to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy eye scandalise thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee with one eye to enter into the kingdom of God than, having two eyes to be cast into hell of fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. For every one shall be salted with salt. Salt is good. But if the salt become unsavoury, wherewith will you season it? Have salt in you and have peace among you. » (*Mark ix, 37-49.*)

« And there assembled together unto Him the Pharisees and some of the scribes, coming from Jerusalem. And when they had seen some of His disciples eat bread with common, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews eat not without often washing their hands, holding the tradition of the ancients; and when they come from the market, unless they be washed, they eat not. And many other things there are that have been delivered to them to observe, the washings of cups and of pots, and of brazen vessels, and of beds.

« And the Pharisees and Scribes asked Him: « Why do not Thy disciples walk according to the tradition of the ancients, but they eat bread with common hands? » But He answering, said to them: « Well did Isaias prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: *This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain do they worship Me, teaching doctrines and precepts of men.* For leaving the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, the washings of pots and of cups; and many other things you do like to these! » (*Mark vii, 1-8.*)

7. If we have given scandal to any one, it is our duty at once the mischief to the utmost of our power (1) by drawing him away from the evil into which we have led him, (2) by inciting him to virtue by good example, and (3) by praying for him.

8. If we fail in this obvious duty, salving our consciences with the reflection that we are only acting as others do, we shall be greatly to

blame and show an utter lack of common sense, for if they are willing to lose their souls, that is no reason why we should lose ours.

Explanation of the Plate.

9. Here we see Our Lord standing in the midst of His disciples as He points with one hand to the child He has called to Himself, and, with the other, to the man who in the Parable just cited, having scandalized one of His little ones, has deserved to be cast into the sea with a millstone round his neck.
