

THE COMMANDMENTS.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD IN GENERAL.

1. In order to be saved it is not enough to believe the truths that God has revealed; we must also obey His commandments and those of the Church.

2. The Commandments of God are ten in number, whence their name of the Decalogue. They were given to us by God on Mount Sinai, through the ministry of Moses, fifty days after the Israelites left Egypt.

3. Here they are as He gave them (*Exod. xx, 2-17.*):

I. I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt and out of the bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth, Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them.

II. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

III. Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day.

IV. Honour thy father and thy mother that thou mayest be long-lived in the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.

V. Thou shalt not kill.

VI. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VII. Thou shalt not steal.

VIII. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

IX. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor his servant, nor his handmaid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his.

4. God engraved the Decalogue on two tables of stone. One of these contained the first three commandments, all relating to God. The

remaining seven commandments, all relating to our neighbour, were on the other table.

5. In the group of three having reference to God alone the First commands us to adore Him, the Second to respect His name, and the Third to keep holy the day set apart for honouring Him.

6. Of the remaining seven commandments, all relating to our neighbour, one, the Fourth, enjoins us to honour our parents, while the remaining six forbid us to do injury to our neighbour either in his person or in his property or in his honour.

7. From the very beginning the Decalogue was engraven in the hearts of men. God gave them out again on Mount Sinai, because through the ignorance and passions of men, the consequence of original sin, they had become almost entirely obliterated from the human conscience.

8. The Decalogue is just as much binding on us as it was on the Israelites, for Christ Himself says: « *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* » (Matt. XIX, 17.)

9. He repeats the same command in the following parable:

« And behold a certain lawyer stood up, tempting Him, and saying: « Master, what must I do to possess eternal life? » But He said to him: « What is written in the law? How readest thou? » He answering, said: « Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself. » And He said to Him: « Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live? » But he willing to justify himself, said to Jesus: « And who is my neighbour? » And Jesus answering, said: « A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him, and having wounded him, went away leaving him half-dead. And it chanced that a certain priest went down the same way; and seeing him, passed on. In like manner also a Levite, when he was near the place and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan being on his journey came near him; and seeing him was moved with compassion, and going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two pence and gave to the host and said: « Take care of him; and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I at my return will repay thee. » Which of these three in thy opinion was neighbour to him that fell among the robbers? » But he said:

« He that showed mercy to him. » And Jesus said to him: « Go, and do thou in like manner? » (*Luke*, x, 25-37.)

10. We are bound to observe the Commandments of God, because He is our Sovereign Master, who has a right to our obedience, and because with the help of His grace they are easily observed.

Explanation of the Plate.

11. The picture shows Moses receiving from God the two tables of the Law. All the time a dense cloud enveloped Mount Sinai, and the people below saw lightnings flash and heard the crashing of thunder and the clang of trumpets. By these signs God wished to fill His people with a salutary dread so that they might the more readily obey His law.
