

THE COMMANDMENTS.

The Second Commandment (contd.):

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

Failure in one's sworn promises.

1. Having made a promise on oath, we are under a double obligation to fulfil it, firstly, because it is but *common justice* to do what we have *merely* promised, and, secondly, because it becomes also a *religious duty* when we have promised something *on oath*.

2. But an oath to do something forbidden by the law of God can never be binding. In the first place, it is already a mortal sin to have taken such oath (see p.29, para.7), and, in the second place, to carry it out would be to commit a further mortal sin. This was what happened in Herod's case when he had St. John the Baptist beheaded (*Mark* VI, 14-19.)

« And King Herod heard of Jesus (for His name was made manifest) and he said: « John the Baptist is risen again from the dead and therefore mighty works show forth themselves in him ». And others said: « It is Elias ». But others said: « It is a prophet, as one of the prophets ». Which Herod hearing, said: « John whom I beheaded, he is risen again from the dead. ». For Herod himself had sent and apprehended John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, the wife of Philip, his brother, because he had married her. For John said to Herod: « It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. » Now Herodias laid snares for him, and was desirous to put him to death, and could not. For Herod feared John, knowing him to be a just and holy man; and kept him, and when he heard him, did many things; and he heard him willingly ».

« And when a convenient day was come, Herod made a supper for his birthday, for the princes, and tribunes and chief men of Galilee. And when the daughter of the same Herodias had come in and had danced

and pleased Herod and them that were at table with him, the king said to the damsel: « Ask of me what thou wilt and I will give it thee ». And he swore to her: « Whatsoever thou shalt ask, I will give it thee, though it be the half of my kingdom ». Who, when she was gone out, said to her mother: « What shall I ask? » But she said: « The head of John the Baptist ».

« And when she was come in immediately, with haste to the king, she asked, saying: « I will that forthwith thou give me in a dish the head of John the Baptist ». And the king was struck sad. For because of his oath, and because of them that were with him at table, he would not displease her, but sending an executioner, he commanded that his head should be brought in a dish. And he beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a dish, and gave it to the damsel, and the damsel gave it to her mother. Which his disciples hearing, came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb ».

Blasphemy.

3. *To blaspheme* is to speak irreverently of God and the saints and holy persons and things, but more especially of God.

4. There are two kinds of blasphemy, viz; *simple* blasphemy and *heretical* blasphemy.

5. *Simple blasphemy* is the use of irreverent language implying nothing contrary to faith. Cursing God or speaking of Him contemptuous or flippant tone would be such blasphemy.

6. Blasphemy is *heretical* when, besides expressing contempt of God, it errs in making assertions contrary to faith, such as that God is not just or that He does not watch over us.

7. Heretical blasphemy uttered after full deliberation is a mortal sin.

8. When blasphemous language is uttered within our hearing, we should make atonement for it, as, for instance, by ejaculating « God be praised! » « Lord, have mercy on us! »

Cursing.

9. Cursing is not the same thing as swearing. *To curse* is to wish evil to oneself or to say « May God strike me dead! » or « Devil take him! » is cursing.

Explanation of the Plate.

10. *The principal picture* here depicts the birthday feast given by Herod as described in the passage quoted above from St. Mark. Standing by the side of Herod is Salome, who at Herodias, her mother's dictation had asked for the head of St. John the Baptist. On the right we see the saint's head being brought in on a charger.

11. Under the Mosaic law blasphemers were stoned to death. This fact is shown *in the small picture on the left*. A certain man having blasphemed, Moses, after consulting God, ordered him to be stoned by the people. (*Lev. XXIV, 14*)

12. *The other picture* illustrates the result of uttering curses. A ploughman, as he drove his plough along, kept on shouting at his cattle, among other imprecations, « The devil take you? » This was immediately answered by several devils suddenly appearing on the scene and carrying off the animals.
