

THE COMMANDMENTS.

The Second Commandment (concl.):

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

Vows.

1. A vow is a promise made to God with the full resolve strictly to keep it.

2. Every vow is an act of *latria*. Hence if we make a vow even to a saint, it means that we have promised something to God in his or her honour.

3. A vow is *personal* if it is binding only on the individual who makes it, the matter of the vow being inseparable from his personality, as, for instance, a vow to pray. In all other cases vows are real, e. g., a vow to give £ 5 to the poor.

4. A vow is *perpetual* if it is binding for life; otherwise it is *temporary*.

5. For the person making a vow it is necessary (1) that he should be capable of making a vow, i. e., have the full use of his reason; (2) that he should have the full intention of making the vow and of binding himself thereby, exactly as in the case of an oath; and (3) that he should make it only after a certain measure of deliberation, say, the amount of deliberation required for the commission of a mortal sin.

6. For of course no one willingly takes upon himself an obligation, unless he chooses to do so.

7. A vow taken under any external pressure of a grave or wrongful nature is by that very fact rendered invalid. What has been extorted by moral or physical pressure cannot be pleasing to God.

8. *As regards the thing promised* it is necessary first of all that it should be feasible. No one is called upon to do the impossible. Thus, a vow not to

sin at all is invalid, but a vow not to commit any grave sin or even any venial sin deliberately is valid.

9. *If the thing* promised is divisible and some part of it is feasible, so much as is feasible is binding. But there is no obligation at all if the thing promised is indivisible, or, although divisible, if its accomplishment depends on some contingency which in the sequel is not realised.

10. In the next place, the thing promised must be something good in itself and even better than something else that could not co-exist with it. Consequently, as a general rule, a vow to marry, although marriage is in itself a good thing, would be null and void, because the married state is incompatible with celibacy, which is a superior condition of life.

11. But a vow to do what after all is required of us is binding, because its observance makes for greater fidelity and devotion in the fulfilment of one's duty in the future.

12. A vow to do a good thing with a bad object is not binding, for the bad objective completely vitiates the matter of the vow.

13. The vow would however be binding, if, the main objective being good, some indirect evil result of a secondary character ensued.

14. A vow once made, even rashly, is just as binding as an oath similarly taken.

15. A vow to punish oneself should a certain kind of lapse take place is binding, e.g., a vow to give alms if one catches oneself blaspheming.

16. Having made a vow, we are bound to fulfil it. « It is much better », the Holy Spirit tells us, « not to vow than after a vow not to perform the thing promised ». (*Eccles.* v, 4.)

17. Before committing ourselves to a vow we ought, in the first place, to make sure that we can fulfil it, and, in the second place, seek the advice of our confessor.

18. Commutation of, and even dispensation from, a vow may, on good cause being shown, be obtained from the Church.

19. The highest vows we can take are those of poverty, chastity and obedience. Such are the vows taken by all religious of both sexes.

Explanation of the Plate.

20. *In the small picture at the bottom on the left* we see Jephtha returning victorious from war. He had been rash enough to vow that if he was victorious, he would sacrifice the first person he met on his return home; and the first person he saw was his daughter coming out to acclaim him with music. It is conjectured that the girl was not really sacrificed, but vowed to a life of virginity. (*Judges* XI, 30-40)

21. *The large picture* represents Our Lady as a child of three going to the Temple at Jerusalem to consecrate herself to God by vowing herself to virginity. St. Joachim and St. Anna, her parents, are with her, while the high priest is receiving her at the foot of the steps and at the top the aged St. Simeon and the prophetess Anna are gazing at her in rapt admiration and holding out their hands towards her. Angels, whose queen she is, form her escort. The roses on the fifteen steps are symbolical of the mysteries of the Rosary.

22. *In the small picture on the right* are shown sailors on their knees before an altar of Our Lady. During a storm at sea they had made a vow to visit her shrine if saved from death, and their prayers having been heard, they are now fulfilling it.
