

TEN COMMANDMENTS

Fifth Commandment: You Shall Not Kill



REFLECTIONS

Respect for the Life of Others

You shall not kill: and whoever kills shall be liable to judgement
(Matthew 5:21)

What is the foundation of this commandment? God has created all human life and has instilled a dignity and worth for each. We are created in His image and likeness. He alone is responsible for our beginning and our end.

The fifth commandment of course extends beyond the 'routine' act of murder, such as we see in the news every day and in movies. We recognize this action and can easily agree that it is wrong. However, history shows that murder has been rationalized as justified under particular circumstances. Consider what the justification is or was in these circumstances.

- Slavery
- Population regulation
- The WWII Holocaust

- Convenience
- Genetics
- Suffering

Do you believe that there are circumstances that would justify taking another's life? What are they? Are you rationalizing? Read CCC 2263-2267.

Respect for the Dignity of Others

Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but woe to the person through whom they occur (Luke 17:1)

What is scandal? "Scandal is an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil. The person who gives scandal... damages virtue and integrity; he may even draw his brother into spiritual death. Scandal is a grave offense if by deed or omission another is deliberately led into a grave offense" (CCC 2284). This is especially serious when the one leading to temptation is in a position of authority (individuals or organizations), is

highly regarded and visible, or is persuading someone weaker physically or mentally.

To damage the soul of another, to tempt someone to break one of the commandments, to lead someone into immorality, or into situations that may cause injury to the body – these offenses are directly opposed to loving one's neighbor. Consider these situations:

- Skiing, car racing, drugs, drinking alcohol
- Weight-loss advertisements, young women's 'beauty' magazines
- Stem-cell research, cloning, pre-natal testing

Do any of these break the Fifth Commandment, and if so, in what way? Do you see any evidence of scandal in your actions? Do you show disrespect for the dignity of others by gossiping? Do you want to change?

ACTIVITIES

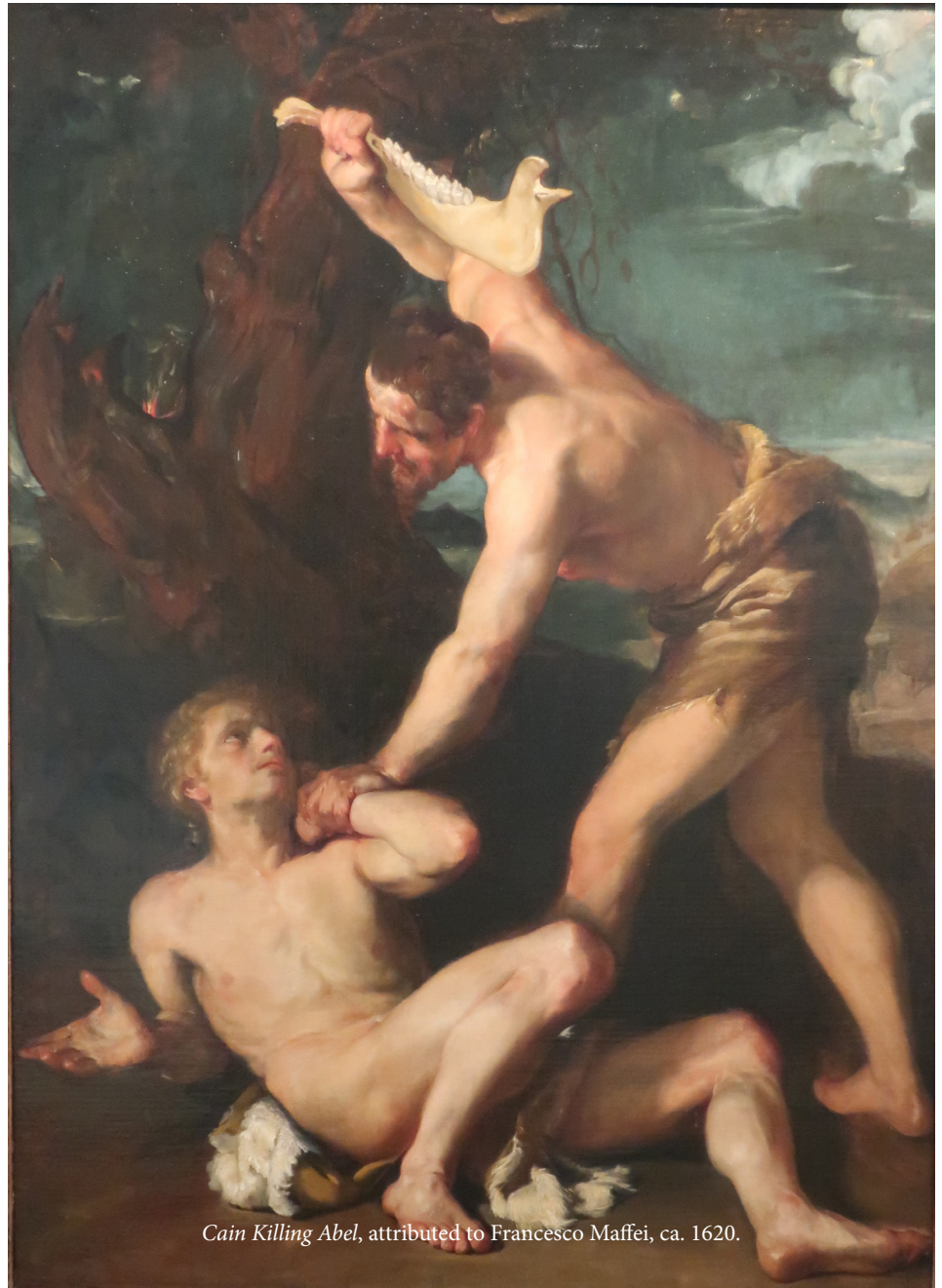
For Children and Families

For Families:

1. Read aloud the excerpt from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where he is telling of the spirit in which the children of the kingdom should live (Matthew 5:21–26). What do you hear? God, in his love and mercy, always has a word to help us in our lives. The Christian life, filled with the Holy Spirit, is to experience forgiveness and reconciliation with others. Is there someone you need to ask for forgiveness? If someone has asked you for forgiveness have you forgiven them? Conclude praying the Our Father, noticing especially the petition about forgiveness.

2. Read aloud another excerpt from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where he is describing the Christian, the one who is living a new life in Christ (Matthew 5:38–48). Share what you heard. What stands out to you as you listen? How is the Lord speaking to you? The Lord, who sends his Holy Spirit, wants this scripture to be fulfilled in our lives. Who is your “enemy” today? In light of this Gospel, does the Christian have enemies? How has this scripture been fulfilled in Jesus Christ? When have we been enemies of Christ? Read aloud Luke 23:34a. Have we experienced the forgiveness, the mercy and the love of God for us?

3. Read aloud John 13:34–35. What do you hear? How are these words of Jesus related to the Fifth Commandment, you shall not kill? How has Jesus loved us? How do these words relate to



Cain Killing Abel, attributed to Francesco Maffei, ca. 1620.

our experiences of forgiveness and reconciliation? To loving our enemies? It was said of the early Christian communities, “Look how they love one another.” To love in this way is a sign that calls others to faith! Can we do this with our own strength?

For Children:

1. With the Fifth Commandment, God proclaims, “You shall not kill.”

God speaks to us in the Bible, from the Book of Job, “In God’s hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.” Every person is created by God and God loves everyone he has created. We are all created in the image and likeness of God. From this fact, we have inherited a dignity through which our life should be respected. With the help of your parents, make a list of those in the world today

whose lives are threatened. Discuss with your parents something you can do to help them.

2. Read or listen to Matthew 5:21–26. What do you hear Jesus saying? Jesus tells us that it is possible to “kill” someone with our words and actions, even if there is no physical killing. This happens in conflicts

and disagreements that lead to anger, judgements and even hatred. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we may seek reconciliation and forgiveness with others. Think of a time when you reconciled or “made up” with someone when there was a conflict, argument or disagreement. Tell someone about what happened. Next, draw a picture of the cause

of the argument and a picture of the forgiveness and reconciliation that took place. Write or dictate a description of each picture.

3. Every person has been created by God out of his tremendous love for us. God loves everyone he has created. We have all been created in the image and likeness of God. Do you want to see God? Look at another person. Saint John says, “Let us love one another, since love is from God and everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.” We can see and understand that each person has a dignity which should be respected. Keep a calendar or journal, recording each day one way in which you have respected the dignity of another person by your words and/or actions. Share this work with your parents.

4. Look at the pro-life poster (left). Make your own pro-life poster. Keep it simple and focused on God’s gift of life and our care for it. You can include simple phrases like, “God loves life”, “Pray for all people”, “All people are special”, etc.

For Youth

1. In the Fifth Commandment God tells us “Thou shall not kill.” This seems pretty easy to obey in our daily lives, but in Matthew 5:21–24 Jesus raises the bar for us. Read these verses in Matthew’s Gospel and reflect on the ways God is calling you to spread kindness instead of anger.

2. Killing someone physically is the obvious sin against the 5th Commandment, but what about killing someone spiritually? Unfortunately we can do this to



God loves every life

I AM THE PRO-LIFE GENERATION



others without even realizing how serious our actions are. Gossip is a form of killing someone's reputation. Think of a time when you gossiped about someone, or someone else gossiped about you. Make a firm resolution to God to never participate in that behavior again and plan on going to confession for the times you have participated in gossip.

For Young Adults

1. Read 1 Corinthians 13. Most likely you have heard a portion of this passage read at a wedding at least once before. We tend to overlook a lot of the message because we hear St. Paul's words so often. Take your time reading this. Perhaps separate the chapter over a full week. St. Paul talks about a progression of love as we advance in age. How can you grow in your ability to love others as you get older?
2. Begin reciting the Divine Mercy Chaplet each day in reparation for your own sins against charity, but also for the world's sins against the Sacred Heart.
3. Reflect on Mary's perfect humility in her acceptance of God's will. Mary is told by Simeon in the temple that her son will suffer and that she would intimately share in his suffering. From this moment on her spiritual martyrdom began. This pain stayed with her the entire life but she humbly accepted God's

will. Pray the Angelus with this in mind each day, trying to grow in humility.

For Adults

1. Search for and watch "The Fifth Commandment: Promote the Culture of Life" on Formed.org. The video begins with a couple of minutes of music to help you pray and focus.
2. Read 1 John 2. In this letter, St. John eloquently describes to us that our love for others first must be born from our love for God. We must know God to properly come to know and respect each other because we all possess the life of God in our hearts. Reflect on this passage. How can you better know the person of God in your daily prayer? How can you begin challenging yourself each day to recognize the life of God in others? Reflect on an experience of the Father's mercy in your own life and how you can share that mercy with those who have hurt you.
3. Read paragraph 18 of *Veritatis Splendor*. You can access this in your binder provided by the parish or online. As disciples of Christ, we are all called to love with "perfect love" as St. John Paul II describes in this passage. As we have said, the Ten Commandments are the law that leads us to freedom. However, to accept this invitation to freedom, we need God's grace to help us on our way. Reflect on this short

section written by St. John Paul II. How can you better meet God "halfway" to begin loving with "perfect love"? What is God calling you to sacrifice in your life to follow him on this path?

For Ministry Leaders

1. This commandment should have us focusing in on what we're doing to promote the dignity of every human life. Spend time at your next ministry meeting praying for the unborn, those who are near the end of their lives, and our troops who are fighting to protect our country.
2. Join our Respect Life group at their weekly Friday night Holy Hour at 7pm in the Adoration chapel. Every week they pray with a different intention that relates to life.
3. Pray with Matthew 5:3-10 during a meeting this month, the beatitudes are particularly relevant to this commandment because of their focus on peace.
4. Another focus of this commandment is a call to care for ourselves and neighbors. Consider taking time within the next month to do a service project for the poor and homeless in Littleton with your ministry. Or go downtown and volunteer with Christ in the City. Or simply invite a fellow member of your ministry over for dinner and fellowship.

We invite you also to listen to our parish podcast "Gratia Plena: A St. Mary Podcast" available on our website, Apple and Google Podcasts, and Spotify!