

**Holy Trinity Catholic Church**  
**RCIA Class Transcript**  
**The Commandments # 4 - 5**  
**Lecturer: Father Francis Peffley**  
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Tonight's class is on the Fourth and Fifth Commandments. Before we get into those, we did have some questions that were written down over the last few weeks that I never had a chance to answer.

One of the questions is, "Referring to the process of becoming a saint, how can actions we take here on Earth change the status of someone who is already in Heaven?" The answer to that is that nothing that we do down here changes the status of somebody who's in Heaven. The Church declaring that somebody is a saint does not automatically make them a saint. What happens is God works a miracle here on Earth through that saint's intercession, and that proves to the Church that that person is already in Heaven. Therefore, the Church can infallibly define that that person is a saint. When the Church defines it, it doesn't *make* the person a saint; it merely *confirms* that the person is in Heaven. We don't change the status. What we do down here doesn't change the status of the saints up in Heaven. Let's say, for example, we have somebody dying of cancer, and we all decide to ask God to work a miracle through the intercession of Mother Teresa, and then, that person is instantly cured at the moment. The Church could look upon that as a true sign from God that Mother Teresa is in Heaven. The Church then declares the person is a saint. It doesn't make them a saint; it declares that they are a saint.

The next question is, "Do the Scriptures lay out or define the process of beatification and canonization?" The answer is no. This is what the Church has, over the years, decided this is the best way to declare a person is a saint, is through this process. In the early Church, it didn't happen like that. This is not written in the Bible. In the early Church, if somebody died as a martyr, they were automatically declared a saint, like when St. Paul was martyred, or when St. Peter was martyred. The Church said they're saints. It's the same thing with the Twelve Apostles; they were all declared saints.

Over the course of the years, the process became a little bit more formal. When somebody became a saint, they were *canonized*, which meant that their names were put into the *Canon of the Mass*. The Canon of the Mass is the Eucharistic prayers that we say every Sunday. The Canon is the approved list of prayers. When somebody is canonized, that meant their name was put in and prayed at the Mass. We still do that sometimes, "May we share eternal life with Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, with St. Joseph," and then we list, "Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon and Jude; we honor Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian,

Lawrence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian, and all the saints.” That’s called the *First Eucharistic Prayer*, or *The Roman Canon*. At the beginning, if somebody was made a saint, they were put into the Canon of the Mass, and therefore, they were canonized; they were put into the list of saints. Now, with 2,000 saints, you’d be here all day on Sunday listing everybody, so the Church no longer puts everybody into the prayers of the Mass; but they’re still called canonized saints. It was about the year 1500, or the 1550’s, that the canonization process began to become more developed; where now, in order to become beatified, one miracle has to be worked through that saint’s intercession after the person has died and gone to Heaven. To be canonized, a second miracle has to have occurred.

The next question is, “What does the word blessed mean in front of the person’s name?” You’ll sometimes see that – “Blessed” or “St.” Blessed means they’re at the process where one miracle has occurred through their intercession. A “St.” means that a second miracle has confirmed that we can now call them a saint. There are many people that are now Blessed. Eventually, if another miracle takes place, then they’ll be considered a saint.

(A question). In the early days, if somebody died as a martyr, they were just automatically proclaimed to be a saint by the people, by the general consensus. There was never a formal canonization process. When St. Francis died in the year 1200 or so, 1226 or whenever it was, I think within three years, the Church officially canonized him; so that was very quick. Some of the quickest beatifications are within a few years. Nowadays though, after somebody dies, it’s usually a five-year waiting period, and then the cause is officially introduced in Rome. Nowadays, the quickest somebody can be beatified is within about five years. Mother Teresa was very quick. Padre Pio died in 1968, and he was just canonized recently.

(A question). You would be called a martyr, because the word martyr means “a witness.” In fact, it said, “Do you believe in God?” If you said yes, like the young girl in Columbine (I read a book about her; it’s a powerful book, a beautiful book about one of the girls who had the gun to her head, and the fellow asked her that question. She said yes, and she was instantly killed), she would be considered a martyr for God, because she gave her life and profession of her belief in God. The Church may or may not canonize her. If there was enough interest, say if her classmates got together and decided to study her life, and send a case to Rome. They would have to interview people that knew her, and get the letters that she had written. Then, the Church could officially open that cause for investigation for the sainthood of that person. Sort of in an informal way, we would call that person a martyr. The person would not be officially canonized until the Church had examined the person’s whole life, and their writings, and to make sure that they were truly a virtuous and holy person.

Another question is, “Can we begin going to Confession before the Easter Vigil?” I’m glad you’re all excited about going to Confession! That’s great! Your first Confession should be if you’re not Catholic, and becoming Catholic at the Easter Vigil, which is at 8:30 on the night before Easter (Saturday night, 8:30 Mass down at the High School). That morning, we’ll be here to hear the Confessions. It’s best that you do go to Confession that morning. That would be the best time. However, there are cases where you might be getting your marriage blessed in the Church before the Easter Vigil, and you might want to go to Confession before. It is possible, that if you’re going to be out of town, you could arrange your First Confession even before the Easter Vigil. Normally it would be done that morning.

Another question has to do with a couple that’s moving to Hong Kong, and they wanted to know the name of a good Catholic publication that I’d recommend that they could read to keep up on the state of the Church, and the issues in the Church. One would be called Inside the Vatican, which is a very good publication. Also, The National Catholic Register is excellent. There’s another magazine called The National Catholic Reporter, but I would not recommend that; I would recommend The National Catholic Register as an excellent Catholic newspaper. Inside the Vatican will give you the world news about the Church. Those are probably two of the best over in Hong Kong. I would recommend them. Or, if you’re just going to stay in Bristow, I’d recommend these as well!

Let’s look at the Fourth and Fifth Commandments tonight. You might think there’s not much to talk about in the Fourth and Fifth Commandment, but actually, quite a few topics come underneath these Commandments. As we talked about last week, Commandments One through Three has to do with our relationship with God. Commandment Number Four has to do with our relationship with our parents – “Honor thy father and mother.” Commandments Five through Ten have to do with our relationships with our neighbor.

Why did God put the Fourth Commandment at this point? Why did he put “Honor your father and mother” as the Fourth Commandment? It bridges the gap between love of God and love of neighbor, because our parents, especially while we are young, are really God’s representatives for us. By honoring them, we’re honoring God. Therefore, the first Three Commandments have to do with God; Number Four, parents; and then the rest, our neighbor. Our parents really do represent God in our life, especially while we’re young.

What do we mean by “honoring our father and mother?” It means that we respect and love our parents, and obey them in all things that are not sinful, and to help them when they are in need. That’s basically what the Fourth Commandment tells us – respect and love our parents, to obey them in everything that is not sinful, and to help them when they’re in need.

What does it mean when we say “to obey them in all that is not sinful?” Let’s say your mother would take you into the jewelry store, and she would say, “I’m going to distract the clerk, and you go grab that gold ring or that watch.” That would be an opportunity to disobey your mother, because that would be violating the Law of God, which is stealing. If she told you to do something sinful, you would not, and should not, obey that.

As we grow up, we should provide for our parents in need, and make their lives as comfortable as possible. We should especially provide for our parents in their last illness. Make sure that if they are Catholic, that you send for the priest, to have the priest give them the Anointing of the Sick, to hear their Confession, to give them Communion, to make sure they die with great care, love, and dignity, as comfortable as possible; and to make sure that their soul is ready to meet God. They might not be Catholic, but you could perhaps arrange for their Protestant minister or rabbi to come, to pray with them, to visit them, and to help them in their spiritual journey to the next life. We should also provide for them a worthy funeral, and we should pray for them, and pray for the happy repose of their soul. If you could, on the anniversary of their death, to have a Mass said for them. That would be a very good and thoughtful idea.

We should be obedient and respectful to our parents, because Christ was obedient and respectful to Mary and Joseph. That’s a powerful example for us, isn’t it? Because Christ was the Son of God, and yet, He willingly obeyed Mary, His mother, and St. Joseph, His foster father.

This Commandment also requires us to respect all of our other lawful superiors. This would be our guardians, if you were raised by an aunt, uncle, or grandparents. We’re called to respect and honor them, and to respect all elderly people as well. Employees are called to respect and honor their superiors. Also, we’re called to respect and obey all legitimate civil and ecclesiastical authorities. There’s a quote here from Romans, Chapter 13, St. Paul’s letter, “Let everyone be subject to the higher authorities, for there exists no authority except from God. Those who exist have been appointed by God.” Remember when the Lord was before Pontius Pilate? Pilate said, “I have the power to crucify You or the power to set You free.” The Lord said, “You would have no authority over Me had it not been given to you from above.” All authority really comes from God.

Regarding ecclesiastical superiors, this is regarding the Church: respect and reverence to the Pope, to Bishops, to priests; because they are our spiritual fathers. They in turn (Bishops, clergy, priests, and deacons) have the obligation to care for those under their shepherding, to teach them the truths of the Faith, and to help them lead good lives.

What are the duties of parents towards their children? First of all:

- To provide for the spiritual and bodily welfare of the children
- To provide them with food, clothing, shelter

- To take care of them when they're sick
- To protect them as best as you can from illness and accidents
- To provide for their education
- To make sure that they go to good schools. If possible, a good Christian or Catholic school would be excellent. Sometimes, a couple might not be able to afford that, so then, they could perhaps, if their kids go to public school, make sure that they receive religious education through Sunday schools or CCD.
- Parents are called to provide for the moral foundation, the moral education of their children, in mind, heart, and soul, to make sure the child is raised with good habits, qualities, and virtues (knowing what's right from wrong, and not lying, not stealing, and not doing bad things) – to provide for the religious and moral training of their child.

Parents give the children religious training by first of all, teaching them their prayers at a young age. Little kids, even at a young age, can learn how to make the Sign of the Cross. They should be taught how to say Grace at Meals. They should be taught their prayers – the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be. They should be encouraged to read their Bible; just get them a Children's Bible, even from a young age, and start going through the Bible stories with them, so that they get to know the Old and the New Testament.

Family prayers are indispensable, to pray before meal, to pray after meals, to have daily devotions with your kids. At night, when you tuck them into bed, read them some stories of the Bible or the saints, and then, also try to talk to them about the Lord from your own heart. Say the Morning Prayers with them. Say Evening Prayers with them. That's one of your great responsibilities as parents.

Also, your job is to be vigilant, to guard your child from evil. What you want to do is protect your child's innocence, in this world that we live in. The ways young children are often corrupted are through the television programs that might be allowed to be shown in the house. Parents have to be very careful not to let bad programming come into the home. Make sure your children don't watch bad movies, or listen to bad music, or have access to bad web sites on the Internet. Parents have a very serious obligation to put blocks on these websites that, if a child is on the computer, none of these things will ever be able to come up on the screen. It's a very serious obligation, because we never want to lead a little one astray. Woe to those parents who corrupt their children, and don't teach them right from wrong, don't teach them the Ten Commandments.

Parents are called to give good example to their children by telling the truth themselves, by going to Church faithfully each and every Sunday, by saying their prayers, by going to the sacraments, and by fulfilling their Christian duties. If a child wants to grow up and become a doctor, nurse, lawyer, priest, or a nun, the parents should help to counsel that child and direct that child to its proper vocation, advising, but never forcing. The same thing goes with the state in life. If

a child feels called to the ministry, the priesthood, or religious life, the parents should never say, “No, you can’t do that. You have to go earn \$100,000 a year, and pay for my retirement.” That would be wrong for a parent to do that. A parent should never interfere with the vocation that God wants to give to the child, whether it be to serve God as a missionary, priest, minister, a religious sister, or as a nun. Parents should not be selfish, forcing the kids to do what they want the child to do, but to see where God is calling the child; and then foster that, so that the child will be happy, and will do God’s will in his or her life.

(A question). The obligation is on the part of passing on the Faith to the children. If parents could send their children to a good Catholic school, or a good Christian school, that would be ideal. It would not be an obligation to send them to Catholic school; it would be an obligation to pass on the Faith to the kids. Many times, if parents can’t afford a private school, then, if their kids are in the public school, they do have to provide for the child’s religious education, by making sure they’re in CCD, or be home-schooled, to learn the Faith. So, the main thing is to pass on the Faith to the kids. The Faith, primarily, is passed on through the parents to the children. The Catholic school system is to aid and support that, and the CCD program is to support that as well. The primary educators of the children are the parents. The parents have the obligation to educate the children, to pass on the Faith to them, whether it be through Catholic school, Religious Ed, or through home school. The obligation is to pass on the Faith, not necessarily to send them to a particular kind of school.

Under this Commandment also comes our duty towards our superiors, to those in authority. Public officials have a grave responsibility before God; the higher their post, the higher their responsibility. Therefore, legislators, members of the Cabinet, judges, and office holders will have to give a very strict account of their office, and what they did in their office. The bills that they passed, the laws that they enacted; they’ll have to be responsible for all these things. The Book of Wisdom says, Chapter 6, “A most severe judgment will be for those who bear rule, so to whom much has been given, much will be expected. To whom more has been given, more will be expected.” That’s why to have the office of President or Vice President is an awesome responsibility in the laws that they make, and guiding the nation. It’s the same thing with governors, senators, congressmen, even down to mayors, and you can work your way down to parents, as well as the priests – all of us who have any kind of authority to help others, we will have to render an account of what we did. The Catechism says, “Public officials must set a good example, because of how many people observe their words and action.”

What is the role of the public official? It is:

- To promote the general welfare by safeguarding the rights of all by passing good and just laws, and enforcing these laws with impartiality
- Interesting themselves in the spread of goodness, good moral customs, and religion

Public officials are called to imitate God's justice, and to help promote the common good. Officials must be impartial. They should not show favor to the rich, and treat the poor unequally. Judges, for example, must act justly, and not be corrupted by the taking of bribes. Public officials should provide for the welfare of the poor and the helpless, the destitute, the sick, the orphans, and to make sure the conditions of the working classes are good. They should also try to promote laws that uphold the sanctity of human life and the family, and laws that promote, support, and strengthen marriages and family life.

What are the duties of employers? "Employers should not oppress or abuse their employees, but give them fair wages, and not exploit them in any way. "Oppression of the poor, the widowed, the orphans, and defrauding laborers of their wages are sins that cry out to Heaven for vengeance," according to the Bible. Some employers make their people work in unhealthy or overcrowded rooms, hardly giving them any time for rest, or for meals, and are required to do more work than they can. Employers are called to give their employees a living wage. That is, a decent enough salary to be able to raise the family on.

What does this Fourth Commandment forbid? It forbids disrespect, unkindness, disobedience towards our parents and lawful superiors.

The last topic under the Fourth Commandment is our civil duties. We as citizens of this country must love our country, and be sincerely interested in the welfare of the country, and respect and obey all lawful authority. We do this by voting. We are very responsible for those we vote for. The fact that we have the ability to vote means we have a very serious obligation to vote. We have to be careful who we vote for. We have to make sure that we vote properly, for the best candidate. We should vote for candidates who will most promote moral and Christian principles. We have to do our homework. We should find out what the candidate's voting record is, and where they stand on family life and pro-life issues, on marriage issues, education, etc.

Under this Commandment also comes the topic of paying our taxes, which is something that we do. Jesus says, "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and give to God the things that are God's." Of course, you're allowed to give money to charity, to get as many tax breaks as you can. Use whatever legitimate ways you can to reduce your taxes, through giving to charities. But when it comes down to it, we are called to pay our taxes.

The Catechism says we should be loyal to our civil officials, and obey their just laws. We have to pray for our civil officials, since all lawful authority comes from God. We're not bound to obey unjust or wicked laws, such as laws contrary to the Divine Law, opposed to the law of God; those cannot be just laws. Therefore, if we were commanded to do those things, we could refuse. Acts Chapter 5 says, "We must obey God, rather than men." Here's a good quote from St. Paul to Timothy, Chapter 2; Paul says, "I urge you, therefore, first of all, that

supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all men; for kings, and all in high positions, though we may lead a quiet and peaceful life, in all piety and worthy behavior.” Paul tells us to pray for those in authority, in our case, the President, the Vice-President, and all politicians. We have to offer great prayers for them, to help them to lead our country in the right path, the path of God.

Sins against our country, things like treason – it’s a crime against God and our fellow man, for example. To summarize, we’re called to pray for our civil leaders. We’re called to love and honor our country; to pray for our country; to try to change its immoral laws. For example, a couple of hundred years ago, slavery was allowed. Thank God that was changed. Currently, abortion is allowed; hopefully, God willing, that will be changed. We would need to do our best to work for the good of our culture and our country, and to make sure that we obey all just laws and authority, and to vote. That’s a serious obligation we have, to vote, and to vote properly for the best candidate, and for those that are thoroughly pro-life; that will promote the sanctity of marriage and family life.

(A question). Let’s say one candidate is anti-abortion, but on other issues he’s not as good, and the other candidate is pro-abortion, but, let’s say, is against gay marriage, or against the Death Penalty. The fundamental principle is the right to life. If we don’t have that, then the other issues are secondary. The most important issue is really the pro-life issue, because if we don’t even allow the children to be born, then these other issues won’t even come into the picture. The most fundamental issue is the pro-life issue, and the other things, like the economy, and other issues, are secondary. Generally, those that are pro-life are also pro-marriage, and against gay marriages. We would be, first and foremost, called to vote for the most honorable, decent, and virtuous person that would be in the running, and also, who would do the less harm to the country, I guess, is one way to put it. So, whoever would do the less harm, we would be allowed to vote for, whoever would be promoting the majority of our teachings, even if they’re not perfect on every issue. I think the most fundamental issue in our society is the pro-life issue, the anti-abortion issue.

(A question). Does the diocese come out with a list of recommended candidates? Private pro-life groups do that, and we should get those, because we can see the voting record of some of these people. It’s not actually published by the diocese itself. It’s published maybe by the American Life League, or Human Life International, or other pro-life groups. The Church is neither Democrat nor Republican. The Church doesn’t come out to support any one particular party. The Church, for example, if you had a Democrat that was thoroughly pro-life, against abortion, and believed in the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman, and had all the issues right, and was also taking care of the needs of the poor and all that, that would be the candidate over a pro abortion Republican. If it’s the other way around, if it’s a pro abortion Democrat against a pro-life Republican, the Church would never, and doesn’t, come out and say, “Everybody

go out and endorse a particular party.” You can have different views within a party. We have to look at each candidate individually, and vote for the best person, based upon all of their beliefs; but primarily, the fundamental one is the right to life.

(A question). Let’s say, in the case of a family that has seven or eight kids, all of the kids probably aren’t going to be able to go to the same school at the same time. Some schools are elementary schools; others are middle schools; and others are high schools. Some families do choose to home school, and that way, the mom and dad can teach all the kids at the same time. Many families are able to do that. That’s a wonderful thing. Others will have to have the older ones in one school; and the younger ones, they can home school. So, it’s really what works best for your families, something that the husband and wife have to pray about, and decide what is the best way. It’s probably not a general rule I can give you, except each family has to look at it individually. For some kids, they do much better if they’re home schooled; others would do better in a regular classroom setting. It depends on the parent’s ability; it also depends on the child’s receptivity.

Let’s get into the Fifth Commandment before we take our break in a few minutes. There are a lot of topics in the Fifth Commandment. Number Five: “Thou shall not kill.” In this Commandment, we are commanded to take proper care of our spiritual and bodily welfare, and that of our neighbor. Sins against the Fifth Commandment would be things such as:

- Murder
- Suicide
- Abortion

And then, in a lesser degree of seriousness:

- Anger
- Fighting
- Hatred
- Giving bad example

We’re called to take care of our bodies, because we are stewards. God gave us our bodies; they do not belong to us. Our bodies belong to God, and we’re called to take care of them to the best that we can.

What is the definition of murder? Murder is the voluntary and unjust killing of a human being. It is lawful to kill animals, for example, for food, because God has given them to us for our use. They can be used for clothing. You’ll notice a lot of people wear leather, and that’s perfectly fine. We have hamburgers and bacon cheeseburgers. We are allowed to have our fish fillets. We’re not required to be vegetarians; if people want to be, that’s fine. There’s nothing wrong with using animals for that, even for hunting; hunting deer is fine. We should not ever treat

animals cruelly, like torturing a dog or a cat would be a sin. That would be wrong, because that is a creation of God. We should never be cruel or inhumane.

In the Bible, God commands the Jews to kill animals; to have animal sacrifices; that's perfectly acceptable, in the Old Testament. We don't have animal sacrifices today in religion, but that was very common in the Old Testament, to sacrifice the Passover lamb, and to sacrifice animals.

When is it lawful to take a human beings life? The Church says it a few times. For example, in self-defense, defending oneself or your family, your spouse, your children, from unjust attack. You're allowed to protect yourself. In that case, if killing the person might be the only way to stop the person, you're allowed to defend your life, and the life of your family and property against enemies. However, we should not do more than what is needed for our self defense. For example, if wounding an assailant is sufficient, it would be wrong to kill that person, if we could just as easily have stopped them by wounding them.

Another time when it's lawful to take another person's life is the Death Penalty, under certain and very rare circumstances. Executing criminals condemned by legitimate authority. The Church has always taught that society must protect itself from crime, and from murder, rape, and these other things. Legitimate authority can allow the Death Penalty. In more recent years, the Holy Father has said that even though a state or a country has the right to protect innocent civilians, if there's no other way to keep somebody off the street. Legitimate authority would have the right to enact the Death Penalty. However, the Holy Father is really trying to move the Church in the direction, since we have so much death in the world; since we live in such a culture of death, the Pope is asking that the Death Penalty be used not at all, or only in the most rare of all cases.

It should only be done in cases where the society cannot keep a person locked away without fear of escape, or being released. So, if there's a choice between the Death Penalty, or life imprisonment without parole, we as Catholics and Christians, should aim for life imprisonment without parole for a couple of reasons. One is that there is so much killing out there, and we're trying to stop the culture of death. It seems to be a more humane thing for somebody to get life imprisonment without parole. It gives a person a chance to repent. If somebody committed a terrible murder, like our snipers, if they were to be killed immediately, let's say, through the Death Penalty, before they had 10, 20, 30, or 50 years to reflect on their sin, perhaps they would die with a hardened heart. Perhaps they would go to Hell. If the person had 10, 20, 30, or 50 years to sit in the cell and think about what they did, and if we prayed for that person; maybe that person would have a conversion of heart, and maybe be saved.

This happened in the case of Maria Goretti, the young 12-year old girl who resisted the advances of her 18 year-old cousin, who tried to seduce her. She refused, on more than one occasion. He took out a knife, stabbed her 12 times,

and left her for dead. She was taken to the hospital, and survived about 24 hours. Before she died, she forgave Alessandro for what he tried to do to her, and for stabbing her that many times. After she died, he was, of course, arrested. He was put into prison. I believe it was for about 18 years that he remained unrepentant, and did not show any sign of remorse. One night he had a dream of Maria Goretti coming to him with flowers, and giving him lilies. He woke up in tears of sorrow for what he had done to this innocent, beautiful little girl. He called the Bishop, and the Bishop came and heard his Confession. Alessandro did another 12 years in prison until he was released. He left that prison a changed man. He even went to the canonization of Maria Goretti at the Vatican, arm in arm with Maria Goretti's mother, who forgave him. This is an amazing story of forgiveness, and how God's grace did bring about his conversion. Of course, it took 20 years after he had killed this little girl. There's always hope. That's why the Church would always ask us to consider not enacting the Death Penalty, unless it's the rarest of cases.

There might be countries where they don't have good prison systems, where they can actually keep somebody for 10, 20, or 50 years without the guarantee that they won't escape. Some countries just don't have that ability to protect their citizens from heinous criminals. In that case, the Death Penalty would be allowed. In our country, the Church is really saying we should give the person life imprisonment without parole, for the hope for their conversion, and to stop the bloodshed.

(A question). The question is, "Is it a sin for us to be in favor of the Death Penalty? The answer is no; it would not be a sin to be in favor of the Death Penalty. That is because the Church has always taught that there is a huge difference between, let's say, an innocent, unborn baby in its mother's womb, and a guilty murderer or rapist. One is innocent; one is guilty. Of course, you have to make sure that that person was the right person who committed the crime without any shadow of a doubt. Nowadays, with DNA testing and all that, we can be a little bit more sure. A Catholic can be a Catholic in good standing, and be personally in favor of the Death Penalty.

(At this point, the first side of the tape ended. It resumes below).

...of not taking that person's life, even if they are guilty. To give them some other lifetime imprisonment without parole, as well, just because we live in such a culture of death. So, for serving on a jury, you as a Catholic or a Christian, have a vote. You could vote either way, and with a clear conscience.

(A question). That is true. A Catholic could be a Catholic in good standing, and be personally in favor of the Death Penalty over life imprisonment, for example. That would be acceptable. I think you phrased it very nicely, that the Pope, in his fatherly advice, and seeing the culture of death that we live in, would advise us to

even respect the dignity of the guilty person, because of the society in which we live.

(A question). I think part of it has to do with the philosophical background of Pope John Paul II. His main teaching is the dignity of each and every human person. We're all made in the image and likeness of God, in that each and every person has value and dignity. Sure, Popes always believe that, but that's the predominant theme of Pope John Paul II – the dignity of each and every person: the unborn, the handicapped, the elderly, the guilty, the murderers. They themselves who have committed heinous crimes, still remain in God's image and likeness, and still have the right to life. There is a dignity there, even if they have used their freedom in evil ways. I think a lot of it has to do with his philosophy that he brings to the papacy. I think that's probably the only way I could explain it.

One of the questions that came up over the break was in regard to animals. Is it okay to put animals out of their misery? The answer is yes. If a horse broke its leg, you're allowed to put the animal out of its misery. If the dog or the cat has cancer, you're allowed to put it out of its misery. That's different than putting grandma out of *her* misery, because remember, human life is sacred. We're made in God's image and likeness. We have an immortal soul. For us, human suffering is valuable. If it wasn't, then Jesus' death on the Cross would not be valuable. Christ showed us that human suffering is valuable; namely, He died for us, and His sufferings brought about our Salvation. So, we can suffer, and offer that up to the Lord, and unite it to Him. That suffering is valuable and redemptive. I won't go into the topic now, but we had that whole class on the mystery of suffering, Anointing of the Sick and Suffering.

Under this Commandment also comes the topic of anger, which is a very strong feeling of displeasure, combined with a desire to punish the offender. Anger is contrary to the spirit of Christ, who is meek and humble of heart. We should not deliberately hurt or wound another person's feelings. If we do, we should apologize and make amends. Ephesians says, "Do not let the sun go down on your anger." Unjust anger leads to fighting, hatred, quarreling, revenge, and even grave sins, such as murder.

There is such a thing as *just anger*. A good example of that in the Bible is when Jesus goes into the Temple and cleanses the money changers from the Temple. That's a righteous anger, a just anger. If somebody hurts somebody, we feel an anger, often times, a just anger.

Then there's hatred. Hatred is a strong dislike or ill will towards another. Hatred is a sin, because he who hates violates the Commandment of God: "Love your neighbor as yourself." The First Letter of John says, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer."

Why is revenge a sin? Revenge is the desire to inflict immoderate or unjust punishment on someone who has injured us, from a motive of anger. Revenge is vengeance, a sin against charity and justice, and it's not the Christian way of life. The Bible says, "Vengeance is Mine, sayeth the Lord." Just leave it to God. There's a Heaven; there's a Hell. If somebody hurts you, they'll come before God.

In regards to this Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," we're called to take good care of our bodies, because it belongs to God; we're stewards of our bodies. We should treat our bodies with respect and dignity, and not injure ourselves deliberately through excessive drinking, smoking, or other forms of gluttony, for example.

Let's look at the topic of drunkenness for a few moments. Getting drunk is a sin, because it injures our health, and it often times leads us into other sins. Paul to the Romans says, in Chapter 13, "Let us walk becomingly as in the day, not in revelry or drunkenness, not in debauchery, or wantonness, nor in strife and jealousy. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and as for the flesh, take no thought for its lust." So, when drunkenness is deliberate, it is a mortal sin. It's a serious sin if somebody goes out and says, "I'm going to get drunk tonight," and then deliberately drinks so that they lose their use of reason. Drunkenness can also cause, obviously, other sins: adultery, drunk driving, killing a person. Alcohol in moderation is acceptable; it's not a sin. Alcohol is something that man has created by using the grapes of the Earth, and so a glass of wine during dinner, or two glasses of wine, whatever, you know what your limit is, is acceptable. Or, having a beer or two watching the football game, and having a pizza, is acceptable. There's nothing intrinsically evil about alcohol; it's really a blessing. To have a glass of wine, that's one of the great joys of life, a pleasure of life; but to use it to excess would be a bad thing. In a sense, it's almost like a fire in the fireplace; when it's in the fireplace, it's a good thing; but it can also burn down the house if the fire gets out of control. Alcohol can get out of control. When it's in its proper place, in moderation, it's perfectly fine. Alcoholism is the number one destroyer of marriages in the country, so it's something you have to be very, very careful about.

Suicide is the deliberate taking of one's own life. Suicide is objectively a mortal sin; itself, murder. He who commits suicide sins against God and against himself, also, against his own family. Suicide is objectively a mortal sin. Does the Church condemn all those who committed suicide to Hell? The answer is no. We always trust and hope in the mercy of God. If somebody has committed suicide, a loved one, brother, sister, or friend, we pray for them. It's not too late to pray for them, because you never know how even your prayers right now could have helped that person in their darkest hour. There's a story that St. John Vianney had a woman who came to him, and was so upset because her husband jumped off a bridge and committed suicide. John Vianney saw in his mind a mystical revelation that God gave him. The man had repented from the time he jumped, to

the time he hit the ground way below. One moment of asking God for forgiveness could forgive a person, even if they had made that wrong decision. In that split second of saying, "God, I'm sorry," God could forgive that person. We should never lose hope. We should pray for the person.

Objectively, to commit suicide is a mortal sin, but there are some mitigating factors that might have lessened the person's culpability. Let's say severe depression, mental illness, psychological problems, things that perhaps in God's mercy would have mitigated that suicide; so maybe the person could have been still saved before they died. There's always hope, and we pray for the person who committed suicide. The Church does not condemn them, but it does condemn the sin, because any kind of murder, whether it be genocide or suicide is sinful objectively. Whether or not the person was personally guilty of that mortal sin, we leave that to God.

There are times when Catholics and Christians have given their lives for Christ: martyrs, priests, missionaries, in taking care of people with contagious diseases during the Plague; they were putting their life on the line. That's not suicide, that is giving of one's self. It's the highest form of love. Jesus says, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Under this topic also comes *scandal*, or giving bad example. Scandal is when we do or say something that puts a stumbling block in somebody else's path toward God. Jesus says, "Woe to those who scandalize a little one. Better that a millstone be tied around their neck and be cast into the sea than to scandalize one of the little ones." Scandal, in a sense, is murdering somebody else's Faith, or killing somebody else's Faith. This has happened so often where, whether it be a TV evangelist that has problems, that affects people, because people can then say, "That religion is fake." Then that person stops going to Church. The problems that our own Catholic Church has had over the last number of years in our country, that has actually hurt a lot of people's Faith. Some people have stopped going to Church. Maybe they're using it as an excuse, but it has hurt the Faith of a lot of people. So, giving scandal is a kind of killing of somebody else's Faith perhaps. We should always be careful not to give bad example to others.

The last couple topics that we want to try to cover in this are *sterilization*, *tubal ligations*, *vasectomies*, because that comes under a sin against the Fifth Commandment. We'll talk about *just war*, and what exactly is a just war, and also the topic of *abortion*. Let me try to cover these as best I can.

Today you got two good handouts about sterilization; about why having a tubal ligation or a vasectomy is a mortal sin, why that's wrong. First of all, it's self-mutilation. It's destroying a healthy, functioning part of the body. Remember that fertility is a blessing. Fertility is something very good; it's something that's working. If somebody, let's say, cut off their hand, that would be wrong to do, because that's a healthy, functioning thing. That's different if the hand was

gangrenous; then of course it's okay to cut that off. The same thing if somebody had to have a hysterectomy, because of cancer. That's okay. The intention there was not the birth control; the intention was to get rid of the cancerous part of the body. There's a big difference between removing a cancerous uterus, or as compared to having just a vasectomy or tubal ligation, for the purpose of saying "no" to God, and "no" to any more children. It's a permanent saying "no" to God in regards to the great blessing and gift of fertility. Fertility is a wonderful blessing and gift – just ask a couple that can't have kids, or is trying their best to have kids. They'll certainly tell you what a great blessing fertility is.

If couples have done this, they would need to repent of it, and ask God's forgiveness. There are a couple of options. You're not obliged to have a reversal, but it certainly would be encouraged and recommended. If a couple could do that, it would probably be the best way to show repentance, purpose of amendment, and restitution. It wouldn't be absolutely required for forgiveness to have that done. The couple could, let's say if they were unable to have a reversal, could try to live as if they were still fertile, and practice Natural Family Planning, and abstain a week or so every month from marital relations. That would be one way to do penance for that sin.

Let me touch on the "just war." Going back to this topic of when is it lawful to take another person's life. In a just war, a nation has the right to exist, and to protect itself. It is lawful to repel by force those seeking to destroy it, and thus, to defend its rights in a grave matter. Nations may also assist other nations unjustly attacked, or whose rights are encroached upon. War, however, is an evil which must not be embarked upon except as a last resort. I'd recommend that you read in The Catechism the teachings on the conditions that have to be there for it to be called a just war. I'll sort of summarize some of the conditions:

- It should be a last resort.
- Other means of diplomacy and peace should be tried.
- The good to be achieved must outweigh the harmful and bad effects.
- There has to be a reasonable hope of success.
- In that war, the safety of innocent civilians, women, and children should be, as much as possible, protected and preserved.

For example, going into a village and machine-gunning an entire village of women and children, no matter what kind of war, that would be a terrible sin. Target bombing factories, specifically bombing just torpedo factories and other things, would be the way that it should be carried out. That minimizes, if at all possible, harm to innocent civilians, and loss of life.

In regard to the last topic tonight, the topic on abortion, basically the Church's teaching, and God's teaching, is that life begins at conception. The mother's womb should be the safest place for a child to be. In our society, though, it's become the most dangerous place for an unborn child. The Church believes in the sanctity of human life from the moment of conception, until natural death, and

that no one, for any reason, ever has the right to deliberately take the life of an unborn, defenseless, innocent child. Even science shows us that life begins at conception.

The three main arguments for abortion are:

- People say, “A woman has a right to do with her own body whatever she wants.”
- Another objection is, “What about the life of the mother? Can you kill the child to save the life of the mother?”
- Another one is, “What about cases of rape and incest?”

Let’s very briefly look at these topics. What about those who say, “It’s the woman’s own body, and she has the right to do with her body whatever she wants.” That is true, certainly, if she wants to get her ears pierced; that’s fine. Or, change the color of her hair; that’s fine. But, once the new life is conceived, it’s a brand new person; it’s a brand new life. It can have perhaps, a different sex, or a different blood type, a different DNA, obviously; and it’s a brand new human being made in God’s image and likeness. Therefore, it’s not, obviously, her own body – it’s a brand new body. It has its own fingerprints, brain waves, little eyes that are forming, ears that are forming, and so, it’s a brand new person, a beautiful gift of God. Luckily, in our society, science is again showing us the incredible view of inside the womb, and what the child looks like, even from the mother’s womb.

There have been many conversions to the Pro-life Movement, even from former abortionists, like Dr. Bernard Nathanson, who had one of the early abortion clinics in New York in the 1970’s. He oversaw 60,000 abortions! In his clinic, he even aborted one of his own children for his wife. After a time, God’s grace converted him, and he realized that what he was doing was taking an innocent human life. He was converted. He was an atheist. He became a Catholic; now, he’s one of the greatest pro-life evangelists in America. God’s grace can convert anyone. That’s one way, perhaps, to answer the question, “What about a woman’s right over her own body?” I think that’s one way to look at it.

Another thing is, “What about cases of rape or incest? Would it be okay to take the baby’s life in those cases?” The answer is no. It’s never right to take an innocent person’s life. We say, “What about the case of rape? A terrible crime was done to a woman. Shouldn’t she be allowed to take the child’s life?” One way to look at it is that two wrongs don’t make a right. It was a terrible sin, the violation of that woman to be raped. That was a terrible thing. But if a child is conceived, that child still has the right to life. To then kill the child would be another wrong, and that two wrongs don’t make things right. Therefore, the child should be brought to full term, or given up for adoption perhaps, or raised by the mother. I have a friend who was in this situation. She kept the child and raised it; it’s a powerful thing for us to think about.

What about the case of the life of the mother? Should we, let's say, to save the life of the mother, is it okay to kill the baby? The answer is no. You can never kill the baby to save the life of the mother, just like you couldn't kill the mother to save the life of the baby. The question is, "Which life is more important?" The answer is both are important, and the Church says you can't kill one to save the other; you can't kill the mother to save the baby; you can't kill the baby to save the mother. There is an understanding, though, and I'll read this from The Catechism, "A mother bearing a child should be very careful to protect and preserve the life of the child. As the soul is created at the very moment of conception, anything willfully done which results in the death of an unborn child is murder. Not even to save the mother's life may an unborn child be killed by direct abortion. Now, if the death of the child results secondarily in an attempt to save the mother's life, and after all precautions have been taken to safeguard the child, this is indirect, and it is permitted for grave cause."

This is sometimes called the *Principle of Double Effect*. When you have the example of a woman who has a cancerous uterus, she is pregnant. The objective is to save both the mother and the child. You try to allow the fetus to grow as much as it can, so that it will be viable outside the womb. However, if it comes down to the fact that they have to remove the uterus, that's the intention; the goal is to save the life of the mother. The foreseen, but unintended side effect is the loss of the child's life. That's different. You're not directly killing the child to save the mother; you're removing the cancerous part of the body, with the foreseen, but unintended, side effect that the child won't be able to live. That's different. That's called the Principle of Double Effect, where your goal is you're not directly taking the child's life, you are trying to preserve both the life of the mother, and hopefully, the life of the child. Again, often times doctors will say, "You're in bad shape. You have to abort your child." The mother decides, "No, I'm going to give it a try," and she gives birth to a beautiful, healthy child, and she survives. That's happened so often. I know of a dozen cases of friends of mine, who were told that by their doctors, and in every case that I know of, the woman survived, and the baby survived, and things worked out. The idea is that if the cancerous part of the body has to be removed, it's not the intention to kill the child, as I mentioned; the intention is to remove the cancer, and it's a foreseen, but unintended side effect, for the child's death. That's different than a direct abortion.

You can tell there's a lot of information under the Fourth and Fifth Commandment.

(A question). I'm glad you brought that up. I probably should have addressed that very briefly tonight. It's the topic of *euthanasia*. That's a whole other topic. I would definitely recommend reading The Catechism on that, because we've already passed our time. Basically, we can never directly kill an innocent person. Things like assisted suicide, with Dr. Kevorkian, who would give poison, or try to kill somebody because they're in pain and suffering, that's a sin of murder, if we're

directly assisting somebody who wants to commit suicide. That would always be a mortal sin. In the case of an elderly person who is in a coma or on life support, the question is, "Can you pull the plug? Can you take the person off life support?" This is a whole other topic. Maybe what I should do is wait and answer that in the next class, and give it its proper time, to be able to explain it thoroughly, because I can get some exact quotes from the teaching of the Church.

Basically, there are a number of things that have to be looked at:

- The age of the person
- The health of the person
- The serious nature of the illness
- The hope of recovery
- Whether or not they're being kept alive by *extraordinary means* or *ordinary means*. You can never, and should never, take away ordinary means. You can't starve somebody to death. You can't just not give them nutrition and hydration – those are ordinary means. You can't pull those away and let the person die of starvation. That would be a terrible sin to do that. With other kinds of extraordinary means, the teaching is that you're not obliged to use extraordinary means to keep somebody alive. You're not obliged to do that. You can if you want, but you're not morally obliged to. That's sort of the one answer, but it's a much more complicated topic, and we'll get into that in maybe the next class, or the class after that. I'll save some time to talk about that.

(A question). The Catholic Bible says, "Thou shalt not kill." We mentioned the Protestant Bible says, "Thou shall not murder." Basically, it's the same thing. Our understanding of the word "kill" is "murdering an innocent person." That's really what that word means, in the original language; it's murder. It's just a different translation, but when the Church explains what it means by, "Thou shalt not kill," it's referring to the killing of innocent human life, not killing animals for food, or whatever. It's the same teaching.

If you can, read the handouts. There's a very good one about adoption, which really is the answer to unwanted pregnancies or teenage pregnancies. How many couples in America are just so desirous to have a child when they can't have one themselves? Adoption would be placing these children in loving homes.

There's this one on "American War Casualties - the Myth of Overpopulation." That's a very good article. Some people say, "We already have too many people on the Earth; the Earth can't support any more people." This answers that objection.

Let's say our closing prayer. When we say this prayer, the Hail Mary, listen to the words in regards to us saying, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the Fruit of your womb." The fruit of the womb is blessed; it's sacred. The Fruit of Mary's womb is Jesus; the fruit of a woman's womb is a precious gift of God.

There's a beautiful letter written by Pope John Paul II to women who have had abortions. The Church and God have nothing but forgiveness and mercy to offer to those who chose this. Often times it was done in terrible fear; or pressure; or at a very young age; or the parents dragged the girl to the abortion clinic; or the boyfriend or the husband dragged the woman to the clinic. It has been just a very painful experience.

The Church offers help and healing. I recommend that if this has been part of your life, or if you ever participated in one by giving somebody money to go have an abortion, or whatever, to confess that. There's hope; there's healing; there's forgiveness. A great group called *Project Rachel* in the diocese helps women work through this pain and woundedness that occurs after an abortion. It's a wonderful healing program.

The Catholic Church has such a gift for healing of women, and men too, because often times the husband had a major role in the taking of his child's life. Don't forget that there is hope; there is healing through Confession. It's a wonderful sacrament. Make sure that you unburden your heart and soul. God can give healing and hope.

I do want to end on that note. We should give you the information on Project Rachel. We can make sure that we get that for everybody next week, and also the letter to women from the Pope, which is so beautiful and touching, that I think that you would be helped by that.