

1. 'As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, I went to the Lord, and besought Him with my whole heart' (Wisd. viii. 21). 2. 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life' (James i. 12).

6. What are we *commanded* by the Ninth Commandment?

We are commanded to think on such things only as are modest and holy (Phil. iv. 8).

7. What does the Tenth Commandment forbid?

The Tenth Commandment forbids all voluntary desire of our neighbor's goods.

'The desire of money is the root of all evils' (1 Tim. vi. 10).
—Example: Ahab (3 Kings xxi.)

8. What are we *commanded* by the Tenth Commandment?

We are commanded to be contented with what is our own, and not to be envious of what belongs to others?

9. How can a Christian, even in poverty, be easily contented with his own?

By bearing in mind, 1. That a clean conscience is the greatest treasure; 2. That our true home is in the other world; 3. That Christ also has become poor for our sake, and that one day He will magnificently reward all those who patiently suffer poverty for His sake.

10. Why does God forbid not only all evil actions, but also all evil thoughts and desires?

Because evil thoughts and desires defile the heart, and finally lead also to evil actions.

'Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart' (1 Kings xvi. 7). 'From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,' etc. (Matt. xv. 19).

Application. Turn your thoughts towards eternity, and you will have no difficulty to despise all that is temporal. 'Walk in the Spirit,' *i.e.*, love God, the

Supreme Good, 'and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh' (Gal. v. 16). Happy is he who can truly say: 'My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God' (Ps. lxxxiii. 3).

ON THE SIX COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

1. Are there, besides the Commandments of God, any others which Christians are bound to keep?
Yes, the Commandments of the Church.

2. Whence has the Church a right to give Commandments?

From Jesus Christ Himself, who has commissioned His Church to guide and govern the faithful in His name (page 140, quest. 42-44).

Therefore, to despise the Commandments of the Church is to despise Christ Himself. 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me' (Luke x. 16).

3. Has the Church no further right than to give Commandments?

She has also a right to watch over the observance of these Commandments, and to punish those who break them; for instance, to refuse them the Holy Sacraments (Matt. xviii. 18), and finally to exclude them from the Church, and to deprive them of Christian burial when they die (1 Cor. v. 3-5). (See page 130, quest. 10.)

4. Which are the general or chief Commandments of the Church?

These six:

1. To abstain from servile work and to hear Mass on all Sundays and Holydays of obligation.

2. To fast and to abstain on the days appointed by the Church.

3. To confess our sins at least once a year.

4. To receive *worthily* the Blessed Eucharist at Easter or within the time appointed.

5. To contribute to the support of our pastors.

6. Not to marry persons within the forbidden degrees of kindred or otherwise prohibited by the Church; nor to solemnize marriage at the forbidden times.

5. Why has the Church given us these Commandments?

To explain the Commandments of God more precisely, and to determine more particularly how they are to be kept; and 2. To lead us to a religious and penitential life, and thereby to secure our eternal salvation.

6. How do these Commandments of the Church bind us?

They bind us strictly—that is, under pain of grievous sin.

‘If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican’ (Matt. xviii. 17) Even in the Old Law God had ordained: ‘He that will be proud and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, that man shall die, and thou shalt take away the evil from Israel; and all the people hearing it shall fear, that no one afterwards swell with pride’ (Deut. xvii. 12, 13).

Application. Be determined always humbly and conscientiously to observe the Commandments and Ordinances of the Church, that one day Jesus Christ may own you as a faithful sheep of His flock, which He has charged St. Peter and his successors to feed.

The First Commandment of the Church.

1. What are we commanded by the First Commandment of the Church?

By the First Commandment, we are commanded, in the first place, to keep holy the Sundays and the Holydays which the Church has instituted in honor of our Lord and of His Saints, by resting from servile work.

As in the Old Law, on certain occasions—for instance, after the victory gained by the Jews over Holofernes (Judith xvi. 31),

and over Aman (Esther ix.)—festivals were instituted in memory of the blessings received from God; so also has the Christian Church, in different times, most justly commanded that several Holydays or anniversaries should be celebrated in honor of Jesus Christ, of His glorious Mother, and of the Saints, His glorified friends.

2. For what purpose were the Feasts of our Lord instituted?

They were instituted that we should, 1. Devoutly meditate on the mysteries of our Redemption; 2. Thank God for His graces; and 3. Renew our zeal in serving Him, and thus render ourselves worthy of the fruits of Redemption.

In the course of each Ecclesiastical Year, the whole life of Jesus Christ is so represented to us in its principal parts as if the mysteries which we commemorate were renewed before our eyes. Therefore it is the intention of the Church that we should every year contemplate with her the life of Christ from its beginning to its end. In Advent we should, by repentance and longing expectation, prepare the way for the coming of our Redeemer into our hearts; in Lent we should, by penance and mortification, participate in His sufferings, die to sin, and spiritually rise with Him to a new life at Easter. At the approach of the Feast of Pentecost we should ardently long for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and then continually endeavor to co-operate with the graces received.

3. Why were the Feasts of the Saints instituted?

That we may, 1. Praise the Lord for the graces which He has bestowed upon them, and, through them, upon us also; 2. Represent to our mind their exemplary virtues upon earth and their eternal bliss in Heaven, and resolve to imitate them; and 3. Implore their intercession with God.

4. Can the Church also suppress Holydays?

As she has full power to institute Holydays, so she has also a right to suppress them again, to transfer them, or to limit them to certain places, when time and circumstances require it.

The doctrine of the Church always is, and must be, one and the same, because it comes from God; but it is not so with her regulations and laws of discipline, which she makes after the

lapse of ages, and must adapt to variety of times and places. Therefore, without detriment to the unity of her doctrine, there may be a difference in the celebration of her festivals.

The following nine festivals are the Holydays, other than Sundays, of obligation in the United States: *The Circumcision of our Lord*, January 1; *Epiphany*, January 6; *Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin*, March 25; *Ascension of our Lord*; *Corpus Christi*; *Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*, August 15; *All Saints*, November 1; *The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin*, the Patronal Festival of the American Church, December 8; and *Christmas*, or *The Nativity of our Lord*, December 25. In some Western Dioceses four of these—namely, the Circumcision, the Epiphany, the Annunciation, and Corpus Christi—are only days of devotion, and not of obligation.

Application. Prepare yourself, in conformity with the spirit of the Church, as fervently for every chief festival of the year as if it were the last in your life. Beware of profaning the Holydays of obligation by servile work, by excesses, or sinful amusements.

5. What are we further commanded to do by the First Commandment of the Church?

By the First Commandment we are further commanded to assist, on all Sundays and Holydays of obligation, at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with due attention, reverence, and devotion.

6. Why are we commanded especially to hear Mass on Sundays and Holydays of obligation?

Because the Sacrifice of the Mass is the most holy and salutary of all Divine Services, and that in which the Most High is honored in the most worthy manner.

7. Who are obliged to hear Mass on Sundays and Holydays of obligation?

All who have sufficiently attained the use of reason (which is generally the case about the age of seven) are strictly bound to hear Mass, unless weighty reasons, as illness, nursing the sick, etc., excuse them from it.

8. When do we sin against this command of the Church?

1. When, through our own fault, we lose Mass either entirely or a part of it; and 2. When during Mass we give way to voluntary distractions, look about through curiosity, talk, laugh, or otherwise behave irreverently.

'The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him' (Hab. ii. 20).

9. Where should the faithful hear Mass on Sundays and Holydays?

In the parish church, when it is possible; but they can also fulfil this obligation in any other public church.

10. Why does the Church wish that the faithful should attend Divine Service especially in their parish church?

Because in the parish church the pastor preaches and offers the Sacrifice of the Mass principally for his parishioners.

11. Does this Commandment of the Church also command us to hear the sermon?

According to the letter it does not; but according to the spirit it certainly does; for the hearing of the word of God also belongs to the worthy celebration of the Sundays and Holydays, and is, in general, an essential duty of a Christian.

In the primitive Church the sermon was generally preached at Mass after the Gospel; therefore the Church, which commands us to hear Mass, had no occasion for giving a particular and express commandment to hear the sermon.

12. Why are all Christians bound to hear the word of God?

1. Because the word of God is for all a most powerful means of sanctification, ordained by God Himself; 2. Because it is indispensable to all to be repeatedly reminded of the truths of Religion, and to be admonished to live up to them; and 3. Because all are obliged to mutual edification, by setting one another an example of Christian piety.

'He that is of God, heareth the words of God; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God' (John viii. 47). It is therefore a bad sign when people neglect to hear the word of God.

13. How should we hear the word of God?

We should, 1. Listen to it with earnest attention, and with an ardent desire of working out our salvation; and 2. We should reflect well upon it, apply it to ourselves, and faithfully follow it.

'Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it' (Luke xi. 28; comp. Luke viii. 5-15).

Application. Make it a rule to assist with devotion on Sundays and Holydays at the Divine Service in the morning and in the afternoon, and to prefer your parish church to any other.

The Second Commandment of the Church.

1. What are we commanded by the Second Commandment of the Church?

By the Second Commandment we are commanded to observe the days of fasting and abstinence appointed by the Church.

2. Which are the days of fasting appointed by the Church?

1. The '*Forty Days of Lent*'—that is, every day from Ash-Wednesday to Easter, the Sundays excepted.

2. The '*Ember Days*'—that is, the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 1. After the third Sunday of Advent; 2. After the first Sunday of Lent; 3. After Whitsunday; and 4. After the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

3. The '*Vigils*,' or Eves, of Pentecost, Assumption, All Saints, and Christmas.

4. The Fridays of Advent.

The *Forty Days of Lent* are ordained in imitation of the forty days' fast of Jesus Christ, in remembrance of His bitter Passion and Death, and that we may worthily prepare ourselves for the

celebration of Easter. The *Ember Days* are ordained that the faithful may thank God for the blessings they have received in each quarter of the year; that in each season they may be reminded to do penance; and also that they may obtain of God worthy priests, these being generally the days of their ordination. By the *Vigils* the faithful prepare themselves for the worthy celebration of great festivals. In many places, as in the United States, many *Vigils* formerly of obligation have been abolished, and one fast-day in each week of *Advent*—the Friday—has been substituted.

3. Is it sufficient to abstain from flesh-meat on these fast-days?

No; we are also commanded to take but one meal in the day, and that not before noon. However, a small collation at night is not forbidden.

The assertion that 'the fast is not broken by eating little at repeated times' has been condemned by the Church (Alexand. VII. Propos. 29).

4. Who is obliged to fast in this manner?

Every Christian who has completed the age of twenty-one, and is not excused by any just cause.

5. Who are excused from fasting?

The convalescent, those who are worn out with age, and those who either have to work hard, or would by fasting be prevented from properly discharging the duties of their calling.

6. When is it commanded to abstain from flesh-meat?

By the general laws of the Church we are commanded to abstain from flesh-meat, unless a dispensation be obtained, 1. On all Fridays and Saturdays (Christmas-day excepted); 2. On the Sundays of Lent; and 3. On all fasting-days.

Our holy Mother the Church has judged it expedient to mitigate the severity of this ancient and general law, in modern times, by dispensations which vary somewhat, according to the different conditions of life, in various countries. In virtue of those for the United States, 1. Saturday is not a day of abstinence unless it be also a fast-day; 2. Meat is allowed on all the Sundays of Lent, without restriction as to times; 3. On some other days each week in Lent, to be annually appointed for each

diocese by the Bishop, meat is also allowed at the dinner or principal meal. But when meat is so used by dispensation at the principal meal on a fast-day or on a Sunday in Lent, fish cannot be used at the same meal. Every one is bound to conform to the regulations and the practice approved of by the Bishop or ecclesiastical superior of his diocese.

7. Who are bound to abstain from flesh-meat?

All Christians who have attained the age of seven, unless a just cause, as illness, poverty, etc., excuse them from it.

8. What ought they to do who cannot well abstain from flesh-meat?

They must, through their Pastor, apply to the Bishop for a dispensation, and perform other good works instead.

9. Why does the Church command fasting?

Because fasting is acceptable to God and very wholesome to us.

10. Why do we say that fasting is acceptable to God?

1. Because God has often recommended fasting, and shown His favor and mercy to those who practised it;¹ 2. Because Jesus Christ, the Apostles, and the Saints of all times have fasted;² and 3. Because fasting humbles our pride³ and moderates our sensual desires.

¹ 'Be converted unto me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning' (Joel ii. 12). 'This kind [of devils] is not cast out but by prayer and fasting' (Matt. xvii. 20)—Examples: Deut. ix. 18, 19. Judith iv. 7-12. 2 Paral. xx. 3, etc. ² Matt. iv. 2, Acts xiii. 3, and xiv. 22. Moses, Samuel, David, Daniel, Judith, Esther, the Machabees, the widow Anna, and others were wont to fast. ³ 'I humbled my soul with fasting' (Ps. xxxiv. 13).

11. How is fasting useful and wholesome to us?

1. By fasting we make satisfaction to God for the sins we have committed, and thus avert the punishment deserved (the Ninivites, Jonas iii.);

2. We bring our passions into subjection, and thus gain strength not to relapse into sin;

3. Prayer and the practice of virtue are rendered easier to us, and we obtain the more certainly the grace of God and eternal salvation.

12. Is it not superstitious to abstain from certain kinds of food?

It is superstitious, if we abstain from certain food as if it were bad and unclean in itself, as some heretics asserted;¹ but it is not so by any means if we do it in the spirit of obedience and penance, as the Catholic Church prescribes.²

¹ St. Paul combated this heresy (1 Tim. iv. 1-4); and also the Catholic Church has at all times combated and condemned it. ² God Himself forbade certain meats to the Jews (Levit. xi. 2, etc.), and the Apostles to the first Christians (Acts xv. 29). St. John the Baptist ate nothing but locusts and wild honey (Mark i. 6). Eleazar and the seven Machabean brothers, with their mother, chose to suffer the most painful death, rather than transgress the law of God by eating swine's flesh (2 Mach. vi. and vii.)

13. But does not our Saviour clearly say: 'Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man'?

Yes; but the disobedience which proceeds from the heart defiles him (Matt. xv. 11, 18), as it is proved by the fall of our first parents.

Let, however, no one believe that the breaking of the fast is only then a grievous sin when it proceeds from a contempt of the Commandment or from a *deliberate* resistance to the Church. This opinion is erroneous, and has been expressly condemned by the Church (Alexand. VII. Propos. 23). Nay, there is a culpable disobedience when one knowingly and deliberately does what the Church has forbidden, even though it be neither attended with obstinacy nor contempt of the Commandment, but is done either through gluttony or through a weak complaisance to others.

14. Should we, on fasting-days, content ourselves with abstaining from food?

No; we should, according to the intention of the Church, spend these days in the spirit of penance, and

sanctify them by prayer and good works (Isaias lviii. 6, 7).

Application. Respect the Commandment of fasting and abstinence as a Commandment which God Himself has given you through His Church, and consider it an honor to observe it strictly.

The Third, Fourth, and Fifth Commandments of the Church.

1. What are we commanded by the Third and Fourth Commandments of the Church?

By the Third and Fourth Commandments we are commanded, 1. To confess our sins faithfully at least once a year; and 2. To receive the Holy Communion worthily at Easter or thereabouts.

2. To whom must the confession be made?

To any Priest authorized by the Bishop to hear confessions.

In former times the faithful were commanded by the Church to confess their sins once a year to their own Parish Priest, or to ask leave of him if they wished to confess to another Priest. Hence comes this form of the Commandment, which is still in use in some dioceses: 'Thou shalt confess thy sins once a year to thy Parish Priest, or, with his permission, to another.'

3. Where are we to receive Easter Communion?

Conformably to a precept of the Church, we are to receive it in the parish church, if not excused by an impossibility, or by a general or particular permission to do otherwise.

4. At what age are we obliged to go to Confession and Communion?

As soon as we come to the use of reason, and are sufficiently instructed to receive the Holy Sacraments with profit; which must be left to the decision of our Pastor.

5. Why has the Church commanded that the Blessed Sacrament should be received in Easter-time?

1. Because Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist within this time; and 2. Because within this time He died, and rose again from the dead, and, therefore, we also should die to sin and lead a new life.

6. Ought we to think it sufficient to receive Holy Communion once in a year?

No; it is the intention and most earnest desire of our holy Church that we should very often partake of this invaluable grace.

Example of the first Christians (Acts ii.)

7. Why, then, does the Church not command us to communicate oftener?

1. Because the love of God and the care for our souls should alone be sufficient motives to induce us to do so; and 2. Because the Church wishes to prescribe, under pain of excommunication, only what she deems absolutely necessary.

Application. Make it a rule to go to Confession and Communion at least once a month.

8. What are we commanded to do by the Fifth Commandment of the Church?

We are commanded to contribute cheerfully, according to our means, to the support of our Pastors and of our churches and religious institutions, and of Religion generally.

9. Are we bound in conscience and in justice to contribute to the support of our Pastors?

Yes; and by a Divine precept also. St. Paul says: 'So the Lord ordained, that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel' (1 Cor. ix. 13, 14).

Under the *Old Law* God commanded the people of Israel to give tithes and offerings for the support of the priesthood and the maintenance of worship. In the Church, from the beginning, this was a sacred duty. 'For as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the Apostles, and

distribution was made to every one, according as he had need' (Acts iv. 34, 35).

(On the Sixth Commandment of the Church, 'Not to marry within certain degrees of kindred, or privately without witnesses, nor to solemnize marriage at the forbidden times,' see the Sacrament of Matrimony, quest. 7, 14, and 15.)

ON THE VIOLATION OF THE COMMANDMENTS.

§ 1. *On Sin in general.*

1. What is sin ?

Sin is a wilful violation of the Law of God.

2. In how many ways may we sin ?

We may sin, 1. By *bad* thoughts, desires, words, and actions ; and 2. Also by the omission of the *good* which we are bound to do.

3. Are all sins equally grievous ?

No ; there are grievous sins, which are also called *mortal* ; and there are lesser ones, which are also called *venial*.

Some sins in the Holy Scripture are compared to *notes*, and others to *beams* (Matt. vii. 3) ; and it is also written of the just man that 'he shall fall seven times' (Prov. xxiv. 16).

4. When do we commit mortal sin ?

We commit mortal sin when we wilfully violate the Law of God in an important matter.

5. Why are grievous sins also called *mortal* sins ?

Because grievous sin deprives the soul of supernatural life—that is, sanctifying grace—and renders us guilty of eternal death, or everlasting damnation.

'Sin, when it is completed, begetteth death' (James i. 15). 'I know thy works, that thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead' (Apoc. iii. 1).

6. When do we commit venial sin ?

We commit venial sin when we transgress the Law of God in an unimportant matter only, or when our transgression is not quite voluntary.

7. When is the transgression not quite voluntary ?

When with our understanding we do not sufficiently perceive the evil, or, with our will, we do not fully consent to it.

8. Why are lesser sins also called *venial* sins ?

Because they can be forgiven more easily, and even without confession.

9. Should we dread only grievous sins ?

No ; we should dread and carefully avoid any sin, whether it be grievous or venial, as the greatest evil on earth.

'How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God ?' (Gen. xxxix. 9).

10. What should deter us from committing sin ?

The consideration of its malice and evil consequences.

11. In what does the malice of mortal sin principally consist ?

In this : that mortal sin is—

1. A grievous offence against God, our Supreme Lord, and the most criminal disobedience to His holy will ;

2. The most shameful ingratitude to God, our greatest Benefactor and best Father ;

3. Detestable infidelity to our most amiable Redeemer, and contempt of His graces and merits.

1 'Thou hast broken my yoke, and thou saidst : I will not serve' (Jerem. ii. 20). 2 'Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken : I have brought up children and exalted them ; but they have despised me' (Isai. i. 2). 3. Of those 'who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and are fallen away [from God by mortal sin],' St. Paul says 'that they crucify again to themselves the Son of God, and make Him a mockery' (Heb. vi. 4-6). 'If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema' (1 Cor. xviii. 22).

12. Can we comprehend the full malice of an offence against God ?