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*The Second
Commandment*



HONOR GOD'S NAME

The Second Commandment

With Discussion Club Outline

By

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THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

THE second commandment is: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." This commandment is really contained in the first which bids us worship God fittingly. As the first requires honor to God in thought and deed, so the second requires it in word or speech. If we are obliged to honor a person and if we want to pay that honor, common sense tells us to use that person's name with reverence. To speak "in vain" means to speak disrespectfully, irreverently. The Name of God is the expression or symbol of God's being. So we honor God by honoring His Name. The second commandment bids us not only speak with reverence God's Name but likewise to talk reverently of holy persons, places, things. It includes reverence for oaths sanctioned by God's Name, and vows made in God's Name for God's truth. We honor God's Name by using it with reverence, respect and truth.

When God first spoke to Moses He said: "I AM WHO AM." He said: "Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: HE WHO IS hath sent Me to you. And God said again to Moses: Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: The Lord God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent Me to you: This is My Name forever and this is My memorial unto all generations" (Exodus iii. 14, 15).

So great a reverence was felt by the Jews of old for the Name of God that they never uttered it. Once a year it was pronounced by the High Priest in the temple. No crime was more abhorred than blasphemy. In fact the penalty for blasphemy in the Old Law was death. "The man that curseth his God shall bear his sin, and he that blasphemeth the Name of the Lord, dying let him die. All the multitude shall stone him whether he be a native or a stranger" (Lev. xxiv. 15, 16). With the coming of the God-Man the law of love supplanted the law of fear and the Sacred Name of Jesus entered into the daily prayer of the Christian Church. Around it has gathered the devotion of the millions who have learned

to love It from their childhood. When God gave the Holy Name to His Divine Son It was borne upon the lips of an angel, and committed to her who was the holiest of God's children. "And the angel said to her: Fear not Mary for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call His Name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of His Kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i. 30-33). Receiving His Name before His birth, our Lord claimed It by the shedding of His Blood at the circumcision. "And after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His Name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke ii. 21).

The Power of the Holy Name

Jesus means Saviour. The supreme mission of our divine Lord is expressed by His Sacred Name. And at the very dawn of the Church's history God showed forth the power of the Holy Name in the miracle wrought by Peter and John when they "went up into the temple at the ninth hour of prayer. And a certain man who was lame from his mother's womb was carried; whom they laid every day at the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, that he might ask alms of them that went into the temple." The poor cripple cried out to Peter and John begging for alms. Peter and John turned toward him and said: "Look upon us." The beggar looked at them earnestly hoping for aid. Then Peter spoke: "Silver and gold I have none, but what I have I give thee: In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth arise and walk. And taking him by the right hand he lifted him up, and forthwith his feet and soles received strength. And he leaping up, stood and walked, and went with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God." As he was very well known to the people there was much excitement among the temple worshipers. They gathered around the porch of the temple that

was called Solomon's. Peter turned to the crowd and spoke: "Ye men of Israel why wonder you at this? or why look you upon us if by our strength or power we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified His Son Jesus, Whom you indeed delivered up and denied before the face of Pilate, when he judged he should be released."

Fearlessly Peter continued telling the people that they had denied their Saviour and begged for a murderer in His stead. Yes, they had killed the Author of life, but God raised Him from the dead, and Peter and John were witnesses to His resurrection. It was by believing in His Name that the lame beggar had been restored to perfect health. The cure was right before their eyes. What they had done to their Christ, Peter said, was done in ignorance. So Peter urged them: "Be penitent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out. . . . To you first God, raising up His Son, hath sent Him to bless you, that every one may convert himself from his wickedness."

This miraculous cure, recorded in the third chapter of the Acts of the Apostles is the first manifestation of the power of the Holy Name in the history of the Church. As in the first age of the Church so in every age the truly Catholic heart has responded to God's love by loving the Holy Name of Jesus "Who humbled Himself becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a Name which is above all names: That in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 8-11).

The Taking of Oaths

When we call God to witness to the truth of what we say or promise we pay honor to God. This is an oath. An oath is lawful says St. Jerome when it is taken in Truth, with judgment and justice. The taking of oaths goes far back into human history. God is called upon to bear witness to the

truth as knowing all things and being infinitely truthful. "An oath for confirmation ends all controversy," St. Paul writes (Heb. vi. 16). A declaratory oath is swearing to a fact, a promissory oath is swearing to confirm a promise, an impetratory oath is calling God not only to witness but to punish us if we are untruthful or fail to keep the oath. If an oath is taken in public by civil or Church law it is a solemn oath, privately taken, it is called simple. There should be some form of words or sign calling God to witness either explicitly by using His Name or attributes, or implicitly by invoking the saints or the Bible.

When we say an oath should be taken with truth we mean that we state what we really *believe* to be true. It excludes a lie not *error*. We state what we really *intend* to do. We exclude deception not subsequent ability. What we mean by judgment is not taking an oath rashly but with reflection and discretion as a sacred act; and not unnecessarily but with good cause for God's honor, and for a serious purpose when required by law, obedience, justice, and when necessary for peace or the security of contracts. When we speak of justice we mean the thing we swear about must be in itself good and our intention good. In a promissory oath the object must be possible, good, lawful, just. The prophet Jeremias expressed this centuries ago: "And thou shalt swear: As the Lord liveth, in truth and in judgment, and in justice" (Jer. iv. 2). Without these conditions fulfilled no oath is lawful.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent speaking of the taking of oaths says: "Truth then holds the first place in the taking of an oath. What is asserted must be true and he who swears must believe what he swears to be true, being influenced not by rash judgment or mere conjecture but by solid reasons. . . . The second condition of an oath is judgment. An oath is not to be taken rashly and inconsiderately but after deliberation and reflection. When about to take an oath therefore a man should first consider whether he is obliged to take it, and should weigh well the whole case, reflecting whether it seems to call for an oath. Many other circumstances of time, place, are also to be taken into consideration; and one

should not be influenced by love or hatred or any other passion but by the nature and necessity of the case.

Unless this careful consideration and reflection precede, an oath is rash and hasty; and of this character are the irreligious affirmations of those who on the most unimportant and trifling occasions, swear without thought or reason from the influence of bad habit alone. . . . The last condition of an oath is justice which is especially requisite in promissory oaths. Hence if a person swear to do what is unjust or unlawful, he sins by taking the oath and adds sin to sin by executing his promise."

Those Who Perjure, Blaspheme and Profane

Herod swore to give Salome anything she asked after her dance had delighted him and his guests. Even half his kingdom, he declared should be hers. He knew full well he could not fulfill such an oath. But she did not want half his kingdom. She demanded the head of John the Baptist. Herod gave it. He sinned in his rash oath and added murder to his sin by fulfilling it.

To call on God to witness a lie is the sin of perjury. It is always a mortal sin. To call on God to witness what is true but what I believe to be false is perjury. The civil law metes out severe punishment to the perjurer for if the crime of perjury became widespread civil justice would be shaken to its foundations. What then must the *sin* of perjury be in the sight of God Who is All Truth?

As perjury is a sin against this commandment so is blasphemy. Blasphemy is contempt of God or abuse of God in thought or word. Of the blasphemer the Book of Leviticus says: "He that blasphemeth let him die" (xxiv. 16). Blasphemy may be directly against God Himself, His justice, mercy, truth, or against persons consecrated to God or things sacred to God. This is indirect.

Not only blasphemy but profanity is a sin against this commandment. When in jest the Name of God is uttered, or in temper or impatience the Sacred Name is used irreverently the sin of profanity is committed. What the devout Jew felt

in times past when God's Name was uttered, both Jew and Christian should feel, and that is a sense of awe and reverence. And every Catholic should invoke God's Name prayerfully whenever he hears It mentioned by others with even the—slightest tone of disrespect.

For the Glory of God's Name

To atone for the sins of profanity, cursing, swearing, and blasphemy the Church calls on men to mobilize in a great Christian army called the Holy Name Society. It is an organized group of men dedicated to the ideal of making Jesus the Man-God better known and better loved. In addition the Society's aim is to promote respect for religious and civil authority. In brief its rule, approved by Pope Pius IV, calls on its members: 1—to labor as individuals for the glory of God's Name, and to make it known to those who are ignorant of it. 2—Never to pronounce disrespectfully the Name of Jesus. 3—To avoid blasphemy, perjury, profane and indecent language. 4—To induce their neighbors to refrain from all insults against God and His saints, and from profane and unbecoming language. 5—To remonstrate with those who use profane language or blaspheme in their presence. 6—To go to Holy Communion at least once a month. So it is that every parish endeavors to have a Holy Name Society and our American bishops have issued the call: "Every man in the parish a Holy Name man." Once a year the members make a public profession of Faith by the Holy Name parades. But the good of the society for the individual and the Church is in the silent lives of thousands of men whose daily Catholic action speaks more tellingly than annual parades.

Far in the distant past the prophet Malachias foresaw how mankind through the Holy Sacrifice could give the greatest honor to God's Name: *For from the rising of the sun even to the going down My Name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation; for My Name is great among the Gentiles saith the Lord of hosts* (Mal. i. 11). And David the poet-king meditating on God's Name exclaimed: *Praise the*

Lord ye children; praise ye the Name of the Lord. Blessed be the Name of the Lord from hence forth and for ever. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Name of the Lord is worthy of all praise. The Lord is high above all nations and His glory above the heavens (Psalm cxii).

A Vow Made to God

As I honor God by taking an oath so do I honor Him in taking a vow. A vow is a promise willingly made to God to do something pleasing to Him. It falls under this commandment because like an oath it is an appeal to God. It differs from an oath in this, that while an oath may be about something that is bad as well as what is good, a vow is always about something good. There is no such thing as a bad vow. "I swear to God" means something entirely different from "I vow to God." Again a vow differs from a resolution. For a resolution expresses a determined intention to do a thing without binding myself over to anyone to do it. While a vow is a solemn promise and in making this promise I bind myself to do the thing I promise.

A vow is made to God. While we sometimes hear of promises made to Our Lady or the saints, these are not vows. If we mention Our Lady or the saints in taking a vow, we mean that we are willingly making a promise to *God* in honor of Our Lady or the saints. And of course a vow must be made willingly. There is no such thing as a forced vow. Finally a vow is a promise of something *pleasing* to God, either by doing what is a good thing or avoiding what is an evil thing. For when we make a vow, we make an offering to God. And so it must be something we know to be pleasing to Him and which He will gladly accept. "If we have vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it. It is much better not to vow, than after a vow not to perform the things promised" (Ecc. v. 3, 4).

It is clear that I honor God's Name if I bind myself by vow to His service. This is what members of religious orders or congregations do. They want to serve God in as perfect a way as possible. We call this the Way of the Counsels be-

cause God does not command it but counsels it. It is the way of life for those who have the desire and the ability to imitate Christ's life more closely. It is made very clear from the Gospel narrative of the rich young man who came to our Saviour asking Him how he could enter His Kingdom. Christ's first condition was: "Keep the commandments." The man gave a remarkable answer: "Lord I have done this since my youth." He was a good man. No one could make such a clear-cut statement and be otherwise. And our Lord loved him for his record and gave him a call to something higher: "If you will be perfect, go sell all you own, give it to the poor, and then come and follow Me."

The Way of Perfection

Ever since that day the Church has blessed this manner of life, which is called the Religious Life. It is sometimes called the Way of Perfection, not because those who enter it are perfect, but because those who enter it are trying to make their lives more perfect images of the life of Christ by the observance of their vows and Rule.

The three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience form the foundation of the Religious Life. The Rule makes the superstructure. Each order or congregation expresses its own way of imitating Christ's life by its Rule. So we speak of the Benedictine Rule, the Carmelite Rule, the Augustinian Rule. And as there are many groups of men and women belonging to other orders or congregations we speak of each one's Rule. And we spell it with a capital for it means more than a regulation. It means an idea, a spirit, a system. It has been planned generally by a saint or surely by a very holy person who has prayerfully determined to interest people in the imitation of our Saviour in a very special way. There are ways of life in the Church that are very old, and ways that are very new. So there are numerous religious groups in the Church. We should expect that. For the Church is not only a group of people agreeing on certain doctrines but it is a living organism. Just as the human body is a living organism. In fact the Church is a living body. It is the Body of Christ.

The Mystical Body. That means it is mysterious but real. "We being many are one body in Christ and all members one of another," is the way St. Paul expresses it (Rom. xii. 5). So the life of the Church, like the life of the body, like the life of Christ is varied. The religious orders reflect that life in all its sacred variety.

Briefly the life of Christ was a life of sacrifice. All religious orders or groups reflect that sacrifice by the common expression of the vows. Our Lord came not merely to do the Will of the Father by keeping the commandments, but "to perfect His work." So the religious who takes the vow of poverty does more than observe God's Law on the use of wealth or riches. He gives up wealth or riches. Everyone is commanded by God not to make money or wealth the whole purpose of life. That does not mean we are forbidden to make money or acquire wealth honestly and to use it justly and charitably. But by the vow of poverty the religious makes an offering, a sacrifice. He does more than he is commanded by God's Law to do. He renounces his right to own or dispose of what he owns. For by so doing he hopes to live more like Him Who said: *The foxes have their lairs, the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man has not whereon to lay His Head.*

As by the vow of poverty the religious offers to God wealth or riches so by the vow of chastity there is offered up something more intimate, namely the right to marry and all that right implies. Marriage ordained by God, raised to the dignity of a sacrament by our Lord, is a sacred thing. So the right to marriage is a sacred right. It belongs to every individual. No state, government or person may tamper with it without violating God's Law. The religious taking the vow of chastity imitates Christ's chastity more perfectly. He Who surrendered all human ties calls those who are willing, to do the same. St. Paul in the very beginnings of the Church urged it upon those "who were able and willing." Christian tradition has ever blessed the life of chastity. The Western Church for centuries has required celibacy of its clergy. And the Eastern Church that allows a married clergy does not allow marriage after ordi-

nation to the priesthood. So it is clear how sacred this vow of chastity is, and how pleasing to God.

The vow of obedience makes the offering of the religious complete. For the most precious of all human rights is liberty. The highest power possessed by a man is free will. God has created man free to love Him. He does not want forced service. He does not compel. He invites. "Come to Me" is the ceaseless cry of the Prophet of Galilee. The man who gets the vision of God's love for Him in his heart wants to do something for God in return. What is the finest thing he can do? Give back to God the highest power God has given him. He does this by the vow of obedience.

Take and receive O Lord my liberty,
Take all my will, my mind, my memory.
Do Thou direct and govern all and sway,
Do what Thou wilt, command and I obey.

This verse expresses the meaning of the vow. It is God's Will in everything. By a strange paradox or apparent contradiction the man who binds himself to God by the vow of obedience is the freest man in the world. How so? He goes direct to God with his whole future. He says: "You are the All-Perfect, All-Just, All-Loving. You gave me my life. I return it to You. Not part of it, but all of it. Not some years but all years, not some days but all days, not some moments but all moments, not some tasks but all tasks, the greatest and the smallest. It makes no difference whose is the voice provided it speaks with Your Authority. The voice is only Your instrument. I respond to the instrument but I obey only You."

The Second Commandment Is Fulfilled

What is the pivot of freedom? Choice. I choose this, not that, I prefer one thing to another. I prove I am free. By the vow of obedience a man makes one tremendous choice—*All my life and every detail of my life for God.* This is perfect choice and perfect liberty. By the vow of obedience a man gathers up all the years, days and moments of life that are to

come and hurls them lovingly into the Arms of God. It is his choice. It is his liberty and he uses it to the full.

It may be truly said then that the Second Commandment is most perfectly fulfilled in the Religious Life. For every energy of those living the Religious Life is directed toward honoring God's Name every moment of the day. Every energy of thought, word and deed becomes a holocaust, that is a perfect prayer constantly ascending to the throne of God. All life is prayer and all prayer, life. This sounds so extraordinary that the question may arise which arose centuries ago in the days of the God-Man: "This is a hard saying and who can hear it?" It is a hard saying but for the Grace of God. That makes it easy or at any rate possible and practical. For by the Grace of God millions have followed the Way of the Counsels since the day our Saviour said to the rich young man: "If you will be perfect, go sell all you own, give to the poor and come, follow Me." That is millions have received and followed the vocation to the Religious Life.

And what is meant by a vocation to the Religious Life? First of all from the meaning of the word it is a call. That means a grace given by God. An inspiration arising in the soul beckoning it toward higher things. It is a desire to serve God unselfishly and generously. To give Him all Who asks for so little. To go beyond keeping His Commandments and take up His precious cross in self-dedication to all His interests. To think of nothing and live for nothing but His Kingdom. Besides this desire there must be the ability to do this noble thing. There must be the physical, mental and spiritual qualifications to live in poverty, chastity and obedience under a definite Rule. With the desire and the qualifications there must come the consent of the religious superior admitting the aspirant to the order or congregation that he has chosen. Then there follows the novitiate or trial period in which the candidate proves to himself and to the religious community that he is what he thinks he is. The vows climax this period and the consecrated life follows. God calls very few in the extraordinary way. As He called Saul of Tarsus. He calls the greater number in an ordinary way, giving the extraordinary Grace.

The Extraordinary Way—Saul of Tarsus

Saul of Tarsus received his vocation while he was a persecutor of the Church of God. The ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles gives us the story: "And Saul as yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any men or women in this way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." And as he was journeying along, bent upon persecuting the Christians, he arrived very near to Damascus. Suddenly a light flashed out from the heavens that unhorsed him. And in the midst of the blinding light a voice cried out and said to him: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" His answer was "Who are You, Lord?" And the reply: "I am Jesus Whom you persecute." In his terror and surprise he asked what the Lord wanted him to do. He was bidden: "Arise and go into the city and there you shall be told what to do."

Now the men who were with him "stood amazed, hearing indeed a voice but seeing no man." Blinded, he was led by his companions into the City of Damascus. There he spent three days and nights fasting. Now there was a Christian in Damascus named Ananias. God appeared to him in a vision and said: "Arise, go into the street that is called Strait, and seek in the house of Judas, one named Saul of Tarsus. For he is praying." Ananias demurred for he knew of Saul as a persecutor who "had done much evil to the saints in Jerusalem." But our Lord reassured him: "Go thy way. For this man is to Me a vessel of election, to carry My Name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake."

Ananias did as he was told, and found the house and went in and greeted Saul: "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus has sent me to you. It is He that appeared to you on your way here as you were riding up to the gates of the city. He has sent me to restore your sight, and that you may receive the Holy Ghost." His sight was given back to him and he was baptized and he remained with the Christians of Damascus for some days. "And

immediately he preached Jesus in the synagogues that He is the Son of God. And all that heard him were astonished and said: Is not this the man who persecuted in Jerusalem those that called upon this Name? And did he not come to Damascus for the sole purpose of making prisoners of the Christians and delivering them up to the chief priests?" But Saul continued preaching Christ at Damascus. And from Damascus he went through the whole Roman world preaching Christ crucified until he finally sealed his preaching with his own blood. That is the story of the vocation of St. Paul.

The Ordinary Way—Ignatius of Loyola

Ignatius Loyola was called to the Life of Perfection in the *ordinary* way. That means God used a convalescence and a few books to reach his soul with the same Divine Light that penetrated the soul of Saul of Tarsus. It happened in this way. Loyola was a captain of artillery in the armies of Spain. During the siege of Pamplona when the French were battering at its gates on May 20, 1521, Ignatius was wounded by a canon ball that smashed his right leg and injured his left. Fifty miles from Pamplona was the family castle of Loyola, at Azpeitia. Here he came to recuperate. The badly broken leg had to be reset. He describes the operation by saying: "So they began the butchery and in all those operations he never spoke a word, nor showed any sign of pain except by clenching his fist hard." An instrument was in constant use to prevent the leg shortening. This of course kept the sufferer in bed and he asked for something to read. What he really wanted was a romance of chivalry. The castle of Loyola had no such books so he was given the Life of Christ and the Lives of the Saints. After a little reading he was surprised to find his interest grow.

In plain soldier fashion he wrote the story of his vocation in what is known as *The Testament of Ignatius Loyola*. It is his autobiography written at the urge of his associates. Speaking of those early days he said: "When he laid aside these books he did not always think of what he had read but sometimes of the worldly things about which he used to think before. . . . However Our Lady helped him, bringing it about that

to these thoughts there succeeded others, which came from what he had read. And he began to think he might do what St. Thomas did or what St. Dominic did. . . . He realized that after one sort of thoughts he remained sad, and after the others joyful. So little by little coming to know the diversity of spirits that moved him, he concluded that one kind came from God and the other from the devil. This was his first reasoning about the things of God.”

When Ignatius was well enough he left his home and journeyed to a place called Manresa. There was a cave at Manresa where he often went to pray. Here he fought the biggest battle of his life. For he came to grips with sin, temptation, scruples. He left there a well-experienced soldier of Christ. And after some time his vocation was made clear to him. He would give his whole life to the service of his King. He would sanctify himself and work for the salvation and sanctification of others. He would form an army of men like-minded. This is why he is called the founder of the Society of Jesus. Its first recruits numbered ten. They answered the call to a higher life because Loyola had sounded that call. God used him as His Voice. But in an ordinary way. As God had used two books and a tedious convalescence to summon Ignatius to His service, now He used Ignatius to summon others to that service.

A Great War, a Great Cause, a Great Leader

All these men were fellow-students at the University of Paris. All had plans for their life work. Loyola's talks on God and the things of God upset their plans just as the light and voice from heaven had upset the plans of Saul of Tarsus. Loyola was so beset with the idea of doing big things for Christ and His Church that he talked about them constantly. On the campus, in the halls and rooms of the University of Paris, wherever they met, Ignatius was hammering at the idea that there was a great war, and a great cause and a Great Leader. And that these were the only things that mattered to men who could catch the message, and glimpse the vision.

He had a little book that he had written himself that ex-

plained the war and the cause and the Leader. He got these men to go through the book. The book was called *The Spiritual Exercises* and going through it meant making a retreat. Both before and since that day God has given many a vocation in a retreat. Some of these men took up the book very readily. Some did not. They needed a great deal of persuasion. For example Francis Xavier. He liked neither the book nor the author. But the author was not discouraged. He was a patient man. His first step was to make Xavier his friend. This took time. They were room-mates. And as much as Xavier endeavored to avoid him he could not keep completely clear of this strange man from the Basque country with his Fixed Idea. Ignatius talked with Xavier, but what was much wiser and better he urged Francis to talk. From that talk there came the picture of an ambitious man. For in Francis' mind a worthwhile life meant a professorship and a benefice, with honor, applause, comfort and money. Of course he intended to serve God with all these. He was a Catholic. He was a Spaniard and Spain was holding the ramparts of the Faith against the assaults of false religious ideas. She has ever done so as we know in our own days.

Ignatius wanted to see Xavier not merely a traditional Catholic but an apostle and an unusual apostle. So he kept pushing at him an old question: "Francis, what does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he loses his own soul?" Xavier had heard that before. Many times before. So had every man at the University of Paris of that day. But Ignatius wanted to make this simple but deep truth register in the soul of his fellow-countryman. And in talk after talk as they strolled along the university halls or met after classes in their room, Ignatius fought a great battle for a great soul. "Francis, you are ambitious. Keep your ambition but make it bigger. You want to make a great name in Paris and in Europe as a professor. That is good but not good enough. What will it profit you? Why not join a greater enterprise? Leave the university halls and go into the highways of life and bring souls to Christ." So spoke Loyola.

Xavier did not answer at once. In fact he fought against

an answer. Yet the sentence kept ringing in his mind and pounding at his heart: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" It took two years for this challenge to sink in deeply and grip hard the soul of the man who is known today as St. Francis Xavier, Apostle of India, China and Japan, and patron of Catholic missions and missionaries. The story of his vocation is the call of God coming through the words of a friend, asking for unlimited self-sacrifice for souls and for God's Kingdom.

The Value of the Religious Vows

Leo XIII in his letter to Cardinal Gibbons, written on January 22, 1899, made clear the meaning of the Religious Life. At that time there was a controversy going on in America about the value of the religious vows. The Pope said: "From this species of contempt for the Gospel virtues, which some perversely regard as 'passive' it is but a natural consequence that men should come by degrees to a contempt for the religious life itself. In fact that this is a commonplace with certain champions of modern views can be gathered from the ideas they ventilate about the vows taken by Religious Orders. For they maintain that such vows are quite out of keeping with the age in which we live, on the ground that they fetter human liberty; also that they are more suited to weak characters than to strong; and again that they do not really further Christian perfection nor the good of human society, in fact are really more of an obstacle and a hindrance to both of these. How false are such notions will be evident from the practice and the teaching of the Church, which has always warmly approved of the Religious life. . . . And when such people maintain further that Religious life is of little or no assistance to the Church, they are saying things with which no one at all familiar with the history of the Church would agree, quite apart from the invidious character of their remarks about the Religious Orders" (Acta Leonis 13, xix, 15, 16).

And again in his letter written on December 23, 1900, to Cardinal Richard of France the same Pontiff declares: "Re-

ligious Orders derive their ideals and origin, as everybody knows, from the sublime Evangelical Counsels addressed by our Divine Redeemer to all such as throughout the ages should aim at Christian perfection, to those strong generous souls who by prayer and contemplation, by the practice of austerity and definite Rules, ever strive to ascend to the heights of the spiritual life. Produced under the influence of the Church, whose authority sanctions their rule and discipline, Religious Orders constitute the chosen portion of the flock of Christ. They are in the words of St. Cyprian, 'the honor and glory of spiritual grace,' while at the same time they witness to the fecundity of the Church. Their vows made freely and spontaneously after a period of mature reflection during their novitiate, have in every age been regarded and respected as sacred things, as productive of remarkable virtue. The object of such vows is two-fold: first of all to raise those who make such vows to a higher degree of perfection; secondly to fit them by the purification and strengthening of their souls for an external ministry in which they labor for the eternal salvation of their neighbors and for relieving the many miseries which befall mankind.

“Thus working under the supreme direction of the Apostolic See for the realization of the ideal perfection traced out for them by our Lord, and living under rules which are in no sense whatever opposed to any form of civil government, these Religious Institutions are powerful co-operators with the Church's mission. For this latter essentially consists in the task of sanctifying souls and working for the good of the human race. Hence it is that wherever the natural right of every citizen to choose that kind of life which he deems most conducive to his moral perfection is respected, there too Religious Orders have sprung up, as the spontaneous product of Catholic soil. And the Bishops have rightly regarded them as valuable helpers in the work of the ministry and of Christian charity” (Acta Leonis 13, xx. 340, 341).

And Pius XI, in an encyclical on March 19, 1924, (*Unigenitus Dei Filius*) spoke as follows on the Religious Life: “When the Only-begotten Son of God came into this world to redeem the human race He gave to men certain precepts touch-

ing the spiritual life, which were to govern all who aimed at the goal set before them. But He also taught those who would follow more closely in His footsteps that they must embrace and carry out the Evangelical Counsels. Whosoever then, pledging his faith to God, promises to keep these Counsels, is freed thereby from those hindrances which keep back us mortal men from holiness. For instance from the problems arising from property, from the anxieties and cares of the married life, and from unchecked liberty in every department of life. And so he has thereby set out on so straight and unimpeded a path to perfection that he might almost seem to have already cast anchor in the harbor of salvation" (*Acta Apostolicæ Sedis*, 16, 133).

The vows we have been discussing are called the vows of Religion. But there are private vows as well. A person may not wish to enter the Way of Perfection or may be unable to do so. At times such an individual with the advice of a confessor may take a private vow binding himself to God in an especial manner.

Prayer and the Holy Name

It stands to reason we cannot give the honor to God that is enjoined by the Second Commandment without prayer. For prayer means the lifting of our minds and hearts to God, to adore Him, to thank Him, to ask His pardon, to beg for favors. It is then talking to God in praise, petition, thanksgiving, reparation. St. Paul expresses it in his command to the early Christians: "By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God" (Phil. iv. 16).

A great many books have been written on the subject of prayer. The greatest book on prayer is the Life of our Lord, that is the Gospels. For this is a book in which the real meaning of prayer is brought out very clearly as it is the book that shows how people talked to Christ and how He talked to them. When I talk to God and God talks to me I pray no matter what method I follow. Besides that in this sacred book our Saviour gives a great many special lessons on prayer. When He speaks of prayer to His followers the first thing He tells

them is what *not* to do when they pray. They should not pray like the scribes and pharisees. For these men made prayer into a formula. They had certain set motions that they went through and without those motions they thought they could not pray. Then again they called attention to themselves whenever they prayed. They wanted everyone to see them at prayer or as our Lord expressed it, "They wanted to be seen by men." Because of this of course they missed the whole meaning of prayer. They entered into prayer with pride in their hearts instead of praying with humility.

If we want an example of the way to pray taken from the teaching of our Lord why we have it in His lesson on the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee went into the temple and made himself very conspicuous. Then he began his prayer by telling God that he was not like the rest of his fellow-humans but was observing the Law in every detail, forgetting that everything he did, if it had been done properly, was what he should have done. For God had a claim on everything he did, as God has a claim on everything we do, and everything we are. "When you have done everything that has been commanded you, say 'we are unprofitable servants.'" This was Christ's simple statement on our attitude toward God and the things of God. But that was not the Pharisee's attitude. He thought that he was doing God a favor by fulfilling God's commandments. We cannot do God a favor. In His infinite mercy He often asks us to do what He could command us to do, and almost puts us in a position to do Him a favor. But if we think at all, we know very well that no creature can do a favor to his Creator. Why not? Because every thing a creature has comes from God. Suppose I imagine I shall do God the favor of honoring Him by observing the Second Commandment. So I shall be faithful to my morning and evening prayers. And I am. But why am I? Because God has given me the natural and supernatural power whereby I pray. And in praying I am merely making some return for all that God has given me.

The Pharisee that our Lord took as an example of how *not* to pray made the foolish mistake of forgetting who he was and Who God is. For the first thing that makes the basis of true

prayer is humility. And humility is realizing who I am, a creature utterly dependent on God. Unless I get that straight I cannot begin to pray. Our Lord pointed away from the Pharisee and turned to the publican. For the publican was filled with humility. He did not want to be seen. He would not approach the sacred precincts of the temple but clung near the threshold. Then he talked to God out of the humility of his heart as a child talks to its mother. He thought of his sins and acknowledged them before God, praying for forgiveness. He did not think of the good he had done or talk the language of pride. He saw nothing of value in himself and so threw himself on God's mercy. And our Saviour declared that his prayer was heard. He left the temple "justified." That is his sins were forgiven and he was once more a child of grace and an heir of heaven.

So we find our Lord in His dealings with people explaining very clearly just what prayer is. It is first rooted in a spirit of humility. That is another word for honesty coming from self-knowledge. So the publican at the temple gates was a man of prayer. Again prayer calls for Faith. The Gospels are crowded with examples of this. When men and women came to Christ asking for His help His first question always was: "Do you believe I can help you?" To the blind, the deaf, the sinner, the challenge was always the same: "Do you believe? Have you Faith? Will you do as I tell you?" For prayer does not mean taking God on our terms. It means meeting Him on His terms. There again looking into the life of Christ we find the Pharisees utterly devoid of the spirit of prayer because they were continually trying to bring God to their terms.

If I talk to one in whom I believe and trust, I talk easily and with confidence. And no matter what may be the method of prayer there must be ease and confidence. Posing drives prayer out of the soul. Sincerity keeps it in the soul. We may use many words or few, words that rise spontaneously from our hearts, or words that have been consecrated by long usage in the Church. The point is, steeped in faith in God, confidence in God, and love for God, my words say what is in my mind and heart, and that is prayer. Looking at our Lord's teaching

to His Apostles when they asked Him to show them how to pray we find that He made it very plain that their approach to God in prayer should be the approach of a child to a father. And if there is one outstanding characteristic that marks the child it is simplicity. So when He gave them their first lesson in prayer He told them they were to say: "Our Father." They were not to rely on the long prayer formulas of the day which prompted Him to say of the people who use them: "These people honor Me with their lips but their hearts are far from Me." Yes He told them to bless the Great Name of the Father in heaven, to ask that His Kingdom might come upon earth, and that His Will might be carried out in this world as it is in heaven. They were not to think of themselves first, but of God first.

The Malice of Sin

After they had prayed for the coming of God into the affairs of men, then they were to ask for their daily needs. Not for everything but for what was necessary for the life of the body and for the life of the soul. For the bread that perishes and for the Bread of Life. It is an echo of the prayer of Job: "I do not ask for riches or for poverty but only for enough to meet my needs." So our Lord expresses it: "Give us this day our daily bread." The life of the body is important for the body is the temple of the soul. But the life of the soul is more important for its life will never end. Now sin is what destroys the life of the soul if it is serious sin. And all sin weakens the life of the soul. Put it this way, mortal sin deals death to the soul, venial sin sickens and weakens the soul. So Christ bids us pray to be rid of sin, to be cured of sin, to gain God's pardon for our sins. "Forgive us our sins."

The malice of sin is in the fact that it is an outrage against God much more than in the fact that it is an injury to the soul. And only God's forgiveness can meet the ravages of sin. So we must pray for that forgiveness. And we are to pray a very special prayer. It is this. "O God forgive me as I forgive others." There is a great deal contained in those words. For they make the measure of God's mercy my consideration for

others. If I say that prayer with the spirit of unforgiveness in my heart, I ask God to be unforgiving toward me. If I use those words with vengeance in my heart, I cry to the God of Justice to wreak His vengeance on me. God Who wishes always to give me mercy is prevented by me unless I have a forgiving heart, unless I pray with the spirit of kindness and consideration toward all who have injured me, justly or unjustly.

Sin—that is the one big evil of life we pray to be freed from. But sin does not just happen. Human passion, human weakness, the snares of Satan, and finally the deliberate act of the will make sin. Sin has an entering wedge into the soul. That wedge is temptation. It is an attraction for sin, an occasion for sin, an allurements to sin. It is partly within myself and partly outside of me, this thing that is called temptation. It is within me because of the first sin. For in the first sin all human nature was wounded. We come into this world wounded creatures. We are missing something that the first two people in the world had, that is sanctifying grace. And because we are missing that, our minds are clouded and our wills are weakened. And that's what induces to sin. If we saw clearly always in the light of God's grace, and walked strongly in the power of God's grace, we should never sin.

God had lifted up human nature but the first man let it down. God raised the human soul by the brilliance of His grace to a height supreme. That means man was made so wise and strong that he did not even have a flicker of passion to tempt him. For soul was king and passion was subject, and human life was a balanced life. Once man chose Satan for God he lost that balance. What is worse he lost it not only for himself but for everybody else. There was and is but one exception—the Immaculate Conception, the Mother of God. Every other creature starts his earthly pilgrimage unbalanced. For the urge of passion is a constant urge, the struggle of passion against soul a constant human factor. So St. Paul called it a war. Not a battle merely but a war. A battle may be long or short but a war is harder and a longer struggle. And St. Paul said he saw within himself a war going on all the time. Two forces coming to grips, passion and soul. He

prayed to the Christ he loved to free him from this war. He was not freed. He was helped. His life as every life was to be a warfare but God would help him. In his letters to the different churches he is always coming back to that truth. Ours is a warring life. The Christian—other Christs—vocation is militant. “But MY Grace is sufficient for you.”

So our Lord teaches us to pray against the power of temptation. To pray for the grace to conquer it. To have the strength to avoid it, or coming upon it to have the power to crush it. That is our prayer as Christ has taught it—“Lead us not into temptation.” Keep us away from it; keep it away from us. If we cannot avoid it, may we have the grace to conquer it. “And deliver us from evil.” From the biggest of all evils, sin, and from everything else that is not of God and for God. For such is evil.

To conclude: The Second Commandment bids us honor God’s Name. We are forbidden to take It in vain. In every prayer we say we honor God’s Name. Taking an oath is honoring God’s Name. But an oath must be taken under proper conditions. Profanity, blasphemy, perjury are sins against this commandment. Those who take the vows of Religion honor God’s Name in a special way. The Religious Life is built on the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. And it may be said that the Second Commandment, *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*, is most perfectly fulfilled by those who lead the Religious Life.

DISCUSSION CLUB QUESTIONNAIRE

LESSON I

(Pages 3 to 5)

What does the Second Commandment enjoin?

How is it related to the First Commandment?

What does "in vain" mean?

What does God's Name express?

Besides reverence for God's Name what does this commandment include?

What did God say to Moses about His Name?

How did the ancient Jews regard the Name of God?

What was the penalty for blasphemy in the Old Law?

What Name has entered into the daily prayer of the Christian Church?

Who first spoke the Holy Name and who first heard it?

What is the meaning of the Holy Name?

Whose mission does it express?

When did our Lord receive His Name and how did He claim it?

What is the first instance recorded of the power of the Name of Jesus?

Where is this instance recorded?

Describe it in your own words.

What was Peter's challenge to the Jews after the first miracle of the Holy Name?

What was his conclusion?

What does St. Paul say of the Holy Name?

How does the real Catholic look upon the Name of Jesus?

LESSON II

(Pages 5 to 9)

What is an oath?

When is it lawful?

Why is an oath used?

How many kinds of oaths are there?

What do we mean by saying an oath should be taken with truth?

What does this exclude?

What do we mean when we say an oath should be taken with judgment? With justice?

What did the prophet Jeremias say of taking an oath?

What does the Catechism of the Council of Trent say?

Was Herod's oath lawful? What was its consequence?

What is the sin of perjury?

Why does the civil law punish it severely?

What is the sin of blasphemy?

What does the Book of Leviticus say of blasphemy?

When is blasphemy direct? When indirect?

When is the sin of profanity committed?

How should the devout Jew feel in uttering the Name of God?

How should the Christian feel in regard to the Holy Name?

When the Catholic hears the Holy Name profaned what should he do?

What is the purpose of the Holy Name Society?

What does its rule call for?

What is the society's annual public act of Faith?

What did Malachias prophecy about the Holy Sacrifice and the Holy Name?

What did David say of the Name of the Lord?

LESSON III

(Pages 9 to 12)

What is a vow?

Explain the difference between a promise, a vow, an oath, and a resolution.

To whom is a vow made?

What do we mean in mentioning Our Lady or the saints in taking a vow?

Is there such a thing as a forced vow? A bad vow?

Why do the Religious Orders take vows?

Why is their life called the Way of the Counsels?

How does our Lord's talk with the rich young man explain the Way of the Counsels?

Why is the Religious Life called the Way of Perfection?

What makes the foundation of the Religious Life? The superstructure?

What do we mean by the Rule of a particular Religious Order?

How does a particular Rule originate?

Should we expect few or many “ways of life” in the Church?

Why?

In what manner do the Religious Orders reflect Christ’s life of sacrifice?

Did our Lord do His Father’s Will in merely keeping the commandments?

What is God’s law regarding riches or wealth?

How does the vow of poverty affect the use of wealth?

What is the effect of the vow of chastity?

What is the law of the Western Church regarding celibacy?

Of the Eastern Church?

What does St. Paul teach regarding chastity?

How does the vow of obedience make the offering of the Religious complete?

Express the meaning of the vow of obedience in a few words.

How is the man bound by the vow of obedience really free?

Does the vow of obedience mean doing the bidding of a human will?

LESSON IV

(Pages 12 and 13)

What is the pivot of freedom?

What big choice does a man make in taking the vow of obedience?

How is the second commandment perfectly fulfilled in the Religious Life?

What make it possible to those who are called to lead the Religious Life?

Why is it a vocation? And what is a vocation?

Is it enough to have the desire to serve God generously to constitute a vocation?

What is the novitiate?

LESSON V

(Pages 14 to 18)

Give the story of the vocation of Saul of Tarsus.

Why is his vocation called extraordinary?

Describe the vocation of Ignatius Loyola.

What were the means used by God to give him his call?

How does he describe the dawning of the light of vocation?

What did Manresa mean in the life of Ignatius?

How did he become the Voice of God for his companions?

What society did he establish?

Who were his companions?

What was the constant topic of conversation of Ignatius with his friends?

What little book did he make use of?

Explain Ignatius' method of dealing with Francis Xavier.

What question did Ignatius challenge Xavier with?

How long did it take for Xavier to answer the question?

What was the result of that answer?

LESSON VI

(Pages 18 to 20)

What was the occasion of Leo XIII's letter to Cardinal Gibbons?

State briefly the content of that letter.

What was the same Pope's message to Cardinal Richard of France?

What relation do the Religious Orders bear to the Church's mission?

How have the bishops of the Church regarded them?

What did Pius XI write regarding the benefits of the Religious vocation?

LESSON VII

(Pages 20 to 23)

Why is prayer necessary for the fulfillment of this commandment?

Why are the Gospels the best book on prayer?

What is our Lord's first lesson on prayer?

What was wrong with the prayer method of the Pharisees?

How does the parable of the Pharisee and the publican point the lesson of prayer?

Why is it impossible to do a favor to God?

What is the basis of prayer?

How did the publican show this?

What is the second requisite for prayer?

What was Christ's constant challenge to all who prayed to Him for help?

What drives prayer out of the soul and what preserves it there?

How did our Lord say we should approach God in prayer?

What did He say of those who relied on many words in prayer?

What does "give us our daily bread" mean?

LESSON VIII

(Pages 23 to 25)

Explain the malice of sin.

What alone can meet the ravages of sin?

What does the prayer for forgiveness imply?

What is the entering wedge of sin?

We are wounded creatures. Explain and note the consequence.

Was human life ever a balanced life?

What was St. Paul's name for this lack of balance in human nature?

What was St. Paul's prayer?

How was it answered?

How does our Lord tell us to face temptation?

Summarize the second commandment.

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