

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest live long on the earth.

This Commandment determines the duties of children towards their parents. The sum of these duties is called filial piety, which embraces the love, the respect, the obedience and assistance which children owe their parents.

Indeed, were I to ask you what are the duties of children towards their parents, you would immediately answer: Children ought to love, respect, and obey their parents, and assist them in all their needs.

Fraternal love enjoins similar obligations, though less stringent, between brothers and sisters.

2. Respect. We ought to have for our parents a genuine respect, at once interior and exterior; considering them as holding the place of God, manifesting for them esteem, showing them honour, speaking to them with deference and kindness, receiving mildly their corrections, enduring, excusing, and hiding their shortcomings. It is a holy and a Christian practice to ask the blessing of our parents.

3. Obedience. To obey our parents is to do what they command; and to obey them in a Christian manner is to do so cheerfully and promptly in the presence of God, who wills that we obey them as we would Him. It is, indeed, a doctrine of our faith that our parents and all our superiors are invested with the authority of God, and that to obey them in all that is just and proper is to obey God Himself.

Children owe their parents this Christian obedience in all that is not contrary to the law of God; they owe it especially, as says St. Thomas, in all that regards their education, the formation of their moral character, and in all that relates to the good order and administration of the family.

4. Assistance. Children ought to assist their dear parents in all their needs, spiritual as well as temporal, particularly when they are old or sick and at the approach of death. Above all things, a child ought to see that his parents do not die without the consolations of religion. It would be an act of cruelty to neglect summoning a priest in due time to prepare them for that dread journey into eternity because we feared to disturb them or to augment their sickness. We ought to pray for them during their life, to pray and have others pray for them after their death, and in all things faithfully execute their last wishes.

How happy the Christian family where reigns filial piety! It is a reflection of heaven, where the angels are happy in loving God and accomplishing His holy will.

It is a picture of the Holy Family at Nazareth, where Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, though destitute of worldly riches, lived in the possession of the sweetest peace, objects of the satisfaction of the heavenly Father. They enjoy a similar happiness, parents who imitate Mary and Joseph, children who imitate the Child Jesus.

Let us, my brethren, have ever before our eyes our Lord Jesus Christ, that perfect model of obedience and filial piety, who even on the cross honoured His holy Mother by a most solemn act. Let us generously give to our parents the proofs of a most devoted love, during their life, at the moment of their death, and after their death. Thus doing we shall be blessed of the Lord.