

Thou shalt not kill

The fifth Commandment forbids murder: not only that which kills the body, but also that which kills the soul; that is, scandal.

Besides this prohibition this same Commandment also embodies precepts; it obliges us (1) to pardon, after the example of Jesus Christ, those who have offended us; (2) to give good example; (3) to repair the evil we may have done our neighbour in his soul or body; (4) to assist him in his spiritual or corporal necessities.

By corporal murder we are not only to understand the crime by which one takes the life of another, but also the duel and suicide.

Moreover, the fifth Commandment forbids all that is akin to murder, or that may be the occasion of it; namely, (1) hatred, anger, and revenge; evil wishes and desires of revenge; quarrels, fights, all ill-treatment of our neighbour, and harshness towards the poor; (2) all that is injurious to ourselves, intemperance, those excesses which shorten life, as also rashly endangering our life.

Spiritual murder, which wounds and kills our neighbour in his soul, is scandal. We mean by scandal an act or omission which is either evil in itself or has the appearance of evil, and is therefore the occasion of our neighbour's falling into sin.

Scandal is a most grievous sin, and one which Jesus Christ has threatened with His most terrible anathemas. Woe to the world, He exclaims, because of scandals! Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh!

The fratricide of Cain is less atrocious than that of the scandalous man.

Let us carefully avoid scandalizing our neighbour, especially by indecent words or stories; and let us endeavour at all times to give good example.