

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

Life Is Precious

Last week, we examined the Fourth Commandment as the first of the Commandments that pertain primarily to our love of one another. We mentioned that it was sensible to begin with this Commandment as it pertains to our primary human relationship – our family. It is also sensible that the next Commandment we will explore is the Fifth Commandment, “You shall not kill,” as this represents the farthest antithesis from “love your neighbor.” In other words, killing another certainly does *not* show love.

This Commandment is the basis for which we have recently extolled the virtue of respect for all human life. In several recent columns, we discussed some of the major issues regarding respect for life, such as abortion, human trafficking, euthanasia, suicide, and respecting the poor. [cf. *Looking Through Stained Glass*, “The Value of Life – All Life”, “Traffic Is Never Good, But This Traffic Is Heinous”, “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime (or a Five)?”, and “We All Want to Go to Heaven; We Don’t Get to Choose When”]

Perhaps one of our first considerations of this Commandment might be, “Well, at least there is *one* Commandment I don’t have to worry about.” Few of us have ever intentionally killed another, and even fewer have ever murdered another. However, before we dismiss our exploration of this Commandment, it might be useful for us to explore what Jesus has to say about this Commandment. “You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and

whoever says to his brother, ‘Raqa,’ will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna.” [MT 5:21-22]

When we expand our understanding of this Commandment, we realize that perhaps we may have struggled more than we thought. According to Jesus’ interpretation of this Commandment, if we have been angry with another, we may have broken this Commandment, especially if we have expressed this anger in a negative way. Heated arguments would qualify as an abuse of this Commandment. Also, name-calling and disparaging remarks would qualify. In these cases, we damage (or perhaps even kill) the reputation or emotional self of the other person. Other abuses of this Commandment, for the same reason, would include hatred, prejudice, libel, slander and even gossip.

When we use this extended application of the Fifth Commandment, we might discover that we have more to consider in examining our consciences. Perhaps we might even consider how we have disparaged another, even in our own thoughts.

We grow in holiness in regard to the Fifth Commandment, when we remember loving one another means that we are called to encourage and promote the welfare of others, instead of discourage and disparage them.

