

# The Fifth Commandment



**G**od's creative action is present to every human life and is thus the source of its sacred value. Each human life remains in a relationship with God, who is the final goal of every man and woman.

**The Fifth Commandment** calls us to foster the physical, spiritual, emotional, and social well-being of self and others. For that reason, it forbids murder, abortion, euthanasia, and any life-threatening acts. We are called to create the culture of life and work against the culture of death. This presents us with three challenges.

**1. We need to counter** the relativism that imperils human life, by recognizing that human freedom needs to be consistent with God's intentions and the laws that govern moral life.

**2. We must witness God's** providential presence to all creation and particularly to each human being. "Where God is denied, and people live as though he did not exist, or his commandments are not taken into

account, the dignity of the human person and the inviolability of human life also end up being rejected or compromised" (Pope John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life [Evangelium Vitae; EV]*, no. 96).

**3. We need to confront** the weakening of conscience in modern society. Too many people fail to distinguish between good and evil when dealing with the value of human life. Moral confusion leads many to support choices and policies that desecrate life. Choices that were once considered criminal and immoral have become socially acceptable. Many consciences that were once formed by the Ten Commandments, Christ's moral teachings, and the Holy Spirit's grace-filled guidance are now swayed by the moral confusion of the spirit of the times. We should deal with the weakening of conscience by helping people to understand the Church's teaching on conscience as the capacity to make judgments in agreement with God's law, to protect human dignity and reject anything that degrades it.

