



# Formative Parenting

*Cultivating Character in Children*

*A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania*

## LOVE OF NEIGHBOR – COMMANDMENTS 4 & 5

Love is a choice to give respectful treatment to others regardless of the way that they treat us. Love is not dependent upon response or like-treatment. Jesus gave us the command to “love” one another. He did not say that we would necessarily “like” one another! Love is a challenge. A useful question might be: What does love look like? Through the teaching and example of parents, children first learn how to transfer this abstract word “love” into practical, observable actions. It is in the home that children first experience love and are formed in the ways of love – love of God, love of neighbor, and love of self.

This newsletter, one of a six-part series, presents **COMMANDMENTS 4 & 5** as formulas for love of neighbor. Who is our neighbor? Each member of the global village is neighbor – people that we know as well as strangers and those that we will never meet; those who share culture, faith and politics with us and those whose customs, faith-traditions, and government are different from ours and, possibly, even opposed to ours; those who we find attractive and easy to love and those whose ways are “turn-offs” to us. The Christian scriptures reminded us that loving the least of God’s people is a way of loving God. Treating others with the love that God has for them is a way of expressing our love for God and others.

### **Fourth Commandment: “Honor your father and your mother.”**

This commandment suggests that charity/love begins at home! It calls us to love our parents – to honor, to respect, to obey (*to listen to with our hearts*), to fulfill the known expectations of our parents and to anticipate their needs during our formation years in the family home and then to cherish and care for them in their senior years. Parents have the sacred responsibility to lead their children to Jesus and to create a home “where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule.” (CCC # 2223). *Disinterested service* means doing the loving thing without thought of reward, notice, or payback.

Children show *filial respect* to their parents in the following kinds of ways: modulated volume and tone of voice, quick response to parent suggestion, cooperation, self-control, exerting responsible independence, accepting correction, being accountable for their actions, expressing appreciation (thank you, please) and seeking ways to help.

Cooperative love extends to siblings, relatives, elders, teachers, employers, and government leaders – all those who exercise legitimate authority in our lives. This command carries the expectation that people in authority will govern justly, fairly, and lovingly.

Membership in the larger society brings with it the duty of citizenship: to keep informed, to vote, to exercise co-responsibility for the common good, to obey laws, to pay taxes and to defend one's country. "It is the duty of citizens to work with civil authority for building up society in a spirit of truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom." (CCC #2255).

**Fifth Commandment:  
"You shall not kill."**

"Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end" (CCC #2258). Therefore, protect and promote life in all ways: physically, socially, spiritually, psychologically. . . Respect human life. Respect the dignity of persons. Safeguard peace.

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is threatened by: bad example, bullying, fighting, anger, grudges, scandal, abortion, euthanasia, suicide, unnecessary risk-taking, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, hatred, cruel words, hurtful criticism, prejudice, bigotry, using people, racism, ageism, sexism. . .

**To practice responsible self-love:**

(1) Take proper care of your health – choose dress, food, sleep, hygiene, and exercise that benefits your body.

(2) Reduce stress through proactive scheduling, breathing exercises, simplifying the environment, and avoiding persons or situations that vex your spirit.

(3) Exercise the virtue of temperance – avoid excess in the use of food, alcohol, tobacco or medicine.

**To practice responsible love for neighbor:**

(1) Avoid situations that provoke hatred, revenge, resentment, jealousy.

(2) Treat people kindly and justly, speak respectfully to and about others, and be inclusive of all others.

(3) Exercise the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy and apply the principles of Catholic Social Justice, especially to the most abandoned poor in society. (These topics are the focus of Newsletter #2)

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