

# **CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE**

## **COMMANDMENTS 4-5**

**(Catechism nn. 2196-2330)**

Honour one's parents

### **The Fourth and Fifth Commandments** (Catechism 2196-2330)

#### **The Fourth Commandment** (n. 2196-2257)

The Fourth Commandment reads:

‘Honour your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you; that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land which the Lord your God gives you’(Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16).

In the fourth commandment our attention moves from ourselves as parents having authority to ourselves as children owing honour to our aged parents.

‘The fourth commandment reminds grown children of their responsibilities towards their parents. As much as they can, they must give them material and moral support in old age and in times of illness, loneliness, or distress’(Catechism n. 2218).

To honour one's parents includes respect, care and affection. It is to acknowledge that the life we have is received as a gift. It is also to remember that the promises of God and the gift of the law come to us through our parents. Proverbs (6:20-22) has the following instruction:

‘My child, keep your father's commandment, and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you’(quoted Catechism n. 2216).

To honour one's parents is to be ready to give them back in their need what they gave us in ours. Ben Sira writes:

‘With all your heart honour your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that it was of your parents you were born; how can you repay what they have given to you?’(Sirach 7:27-28; quoted Catechism n. 2215).

Tobit's admonition to his son reads:

‘My son, when I die, give me a proper burial. Honour your mother and do not abandon her all the days of her life. Do whatever pleases her, and do not grieve her in anything. Remember her, my son, because she faced many dangers for you while you were in her womb. And when she dies, bury her beside me in the same grave’(Tobit 4:3-4).

The values inculcated in the family by the Third and Fourth Commandments provide the basis for all the positive values that are to inform human interaction. They direct us to recognise that in all we do we are instruments of God's creative and redemptive action, and that everything is a gift to be accepted with gratitude and shared in love. If we do this we will be God's instruments in bringing about the reign of God's love on earth.

## **Belonging in God's Family**

Since God is our Father/Mother, the Catechism reminds us:

‘Daily prayer and the reading of the word of God strengthen the family in charity’(n. 2196).

Moreover, there is a direct connection between a rich home life and sharing as a family in the life of the Church:

‘Parents should associate their children from their most tender years with the life of the Church. A wholesome family life can foster interior dispositions that are a genuine preparation for a living faith and remain a support to it throughout one’s life’(n. 2225).

‘The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents’(n. 2226).

True love has to be a love of the whole person – something that necessarily includes the sacred.

‘Family ties are important but not absolute. Just as the child grows to maturity and human and spiritual autonomy, so the child’s unique vocation, which comes from God, asserts itself more clearly and forcefully. Parents should respect this call and encourage their children to follow it. They must be convinced that the first vocation of the Christian is to follow Jesus: “If you love father or mother more than me you are not worthy of me. If you love son or daughter more than me you are not worthy of me”(Matthew 10:37)’(Catechism n. 2232).

## **The Family and Society**

The family is a precious gift to the community. It needs the help of the community if it is to fulfil its role. The political community has an obligation to support the family (Catechism n. 2211).

‘The family must be helped and defended by appropriate social measures. Where families cannot fulfill their responsibilities, other social bodies have the duty of helping them and of supporting the institution of the family. Following the principle of subsidiarity, larger communities should take care not to usurp the family’s prerogatives or interfere in its life’ (n. 2209).

In regard to the proper functioning of government, the Catechism reminds us:

‘Those in authority should practise distributive justice wisely, taking account of the needs and contribution of each, with a view to harmony and peace’(n. 2236).

## **Obedience to civil authority**

The Fourth Commandment includes the obligation as citizens to obey civil authority.

‘Submission to authority and co-responsibility for the common good make it morally obligatory to pay taxes, to exercise the right to vote, and to defend one’s country’(n. 2240).

## Obedience to authority

As a balance to this we are reminded:

‘The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel’ (n. 2242).

Obedience to authority does not mean that we must simply obey whatever those in political authority command. There can even be a place for armed resistance to oppression by political authority. However, this requires stringent conditions. These are laid out in the Catechism. Armed resistance is appropriate only when:

- there is certain, grave, and prolonged violation of fundamental rights
- all other means of redress have been exhausted
- such resistance will not provoke worse disorders
- there is well-founded hope of success
- it is impossible reasonably to foresee any better solution’ (n. 2243).

One way of expressing this is to say that there are always limits to the duty of obedience. Another and perhaps a better way is to draw attention to the primary meaning of ‘obedience’. The word does not convey the idea of ‘doing what you are told’, though we would be wise to do so when our own judgment is poor and we are being directed by those with more wisdom, especially when they speak in love. ‘Obedience’ derives from the Latin ‘*audiens*’ (listening/hearing), with the adverbial prefix ‘*ob*’, meaning ‘right up close’. The obligation to obey, then, is the obligation to listen attentively from an intimate contact with the situation as well as with the one issuing the command. Having listened attentively, one retains the obligation to make a conscientious decision. Often this will mean tuning one’s will to that of the person exercising authority. Sometimes it will mean deciding to follow a path that differs from the one in which others are directing us. This is relative to the level of a person’s maturity.

### **The Fifth Commandment** (n. 2258-2330)

The Fifth Commandment reads:

‘You shall not kill’ (Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17).

Hebrew has a number of words for ‘kill’. The verb used here refers to intentional killing by use of force. It is never used in the Hebrew Bible for killing in battle or for killing in self-defence. As it occurs in the Decalogue it directly refers only to the killing of one’s ‘neighbour’, that is to say, a fellow Israelite.

As we would expect Jesus goes further, warning against the attitudes that lead to violence and the taking of another’s life:

‘You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, “You shall not kill”; and “whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.” But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire’ (Matthew 5:21-22).

Jesus demands avoidance of all behaviour that treats others as having no value and having nothing to offer. Being a disciple of Jesus demands purification of the heart and attitude as well as abstaining from violence actions. As John says:

‘The person who hates a brother or sister is a murderer’ (1John 3:15).

This takes us back to the ancient narrative about Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-6; see Catechism n. 2259). In a world where there are so many differences, it is easy to forget that we are brothers and sisters, from the one stock, and with the one God to whom we are responsible. Differences can easily lead to rivalry and to conflict. Human beings, according to the author of the Genesis story, are persons-in-community. He is interested in reality as experienced. Having reflected on human neglect of listening to God in the narrative of Adam and Eve, he goes on to reflect on another dimension of sin: violence exerted by some people against others: those who live in the towns (Cain) against nomadic shepherds (Abel).

God, as portrayed in this ancient story, is not defined within the limits of piety or cult, but is present in everything, intimately concerned for what we do and in dialogue with us, inviting us to face up to our reality and act morally. The author is fascinated by the struggle between creation and destruction, between promise fulfilled and regret at failure. There is the apparent paradox that it is God’s blessing that leads to human creativity and expansion (Cain = ‘smith’), which it turn issues in arrogance, sin and the rejection of the blessing.

Let us listen again to Jesus:

‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.” But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Matthew 5:43-49).

The contrast with the following from Sirach (12:1-7) could not be starker. It underlines the shock experienced by many of Jesus’ contemporaries, especially those who considered themselves masters in their study of the Law, when confronted with Jesus and his teachings:

‘If you do good, know to whom you do it, and you will be thanked for your good deeds. Do good to the devout, and you will be repaid— if not by them, certainly by the Most High. No good comes to one who persists in evil or to one who does not give alms. Give to the devout, but do not help the sinner. Do good to the humble, but do not give to the ungodly; hold back their bread, and do not give it to them, for by means of it they might subdue you; then you will receive twice as much evil for all the good you have done to them. For the Most High also hates sinners and will inflict punishment on the ungodly. Give to the one who is good, but do not help the sinner.’

Protecting citizens

### **Legitimate self-defence** (n. 2263-2265)

On the matter of self-defence the First Edition of the Catechism has been considerably revised. The following statements are from the Second Edition:

‘Legitimate defence can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others. The defence of the common good requires that an unjust aggressor be rendered unable to cause harm. For this reason those who legitimately hold authority also have the right to use arms to repel aggressors against the civil community entrusted to their responsibility’ (n. 2265).

### **The right of the State to punish civil offences** (n. 2266-2267)

Here, too, we quote from the Second Edition:

‘The efforts of the state to curb the spread of behaviour harmful to people’s rights and to the basic rules of civil society correspond to the requirement of safeguarding the common good. Legitimate public authority has the right and the duty to inflict punishment proportionate to the gravity of the offence. Punishment has the primary aim of redressing the disorder introduced by the offence. When it is willingly accepted by the guilty party, it assumes the value of expiation. Punishment, then, in addition to defending public order and protecting people’s safety, has a medicinal purpose: as far as possible, it must contribute to the correction of the guilty party’ (n. 2266).

In 2000 the US Conference of Catholic Bishops produced a statement entitled ‘*Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*’ (<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/criminal-justice-restorative-justice/crime-and-criminal-justice.cfm>). In the Introduction they quote Pope John-Paul II:

‘We are still a long way from the time when our conscience can be certain of having done everything possible to prevent crime and to control it effectively so that it no longer does harm and, at the same time, to offer to those who commit crimes a way of redeeming themselves and making a positive return to society. If all those in some way involved in the problem tried to . . . develop this line of thought, perhaps humanity as a whole could take a great step forward in creating a more serene and peaceful society’ (July 9, 2000).

The bishops ask: How can we restore our respect for law and life? How can we protect and rebuild communities, confront crime without vengeance and defend life without taking life. They cover the following topics:

- stand with victims, but do not exploit their anger/pain to push punitive policies.
- support steps to educate, train, evaluate and counsel those working with criminals
- effectiveness of treatment programs depends on offence, quality of program, support.
- rehabilitation, not punishment for its own sake
- restorative justice, not retribution/vengeance

- victim needs to be heard and perpetrator needs to hear.
- social diseases need cures, not closets
- all have rights and responsibilities

They quote from the Newer Testament:

Luke 4:18 'He sent me to proclaim release for captives.'

Luke 25:36 'I was in prison and you visited me'

Luke 10 Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 15 Parable of the prodigal Son

'Test everything. Retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil' (1Thess 5:21)

'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good' (Romans 12:21).

They spell out some basic principles to consider in thinking about this issue:

- Protecting Society from those who threaten life, inflict harm, take property, and destroy the bonds of community.
- Rejecting simplistic solutions such as 'three strikes and you're out', and rigid sentencing.
- Promoting serious efforts towards crime prevention and poverty reduction
- Challenging the culture of violence and encouraging a culture of life
- Offering victims the opportunity to participate more fully in the criminal justice process
- Encouraging innovative programs of restorative justice that provide the opportunity for mediation between victims and offenders and offer restitution for crimes committed.
- Insisting that punishment has a constructive and rehabilitative purpose.
- Encouraging spiritual healing and renewal for those who commit crime.
- Making a serious commitment to confront the pervasive role of addiction and mental illness in crime.
- Treating immigrants justly.
- Placing crime in a community context and building on promising alternatives that empower neighbourhoods and towns to restore a sense of security.

The Catechism (n. 2267) goes on to speak of the death penalty:

'Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human rights against the unjust aggressor.

## Homicide

If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity with the dignity of the human person. Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offence incapable of doing harm without definitively taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity 'are very rare, if not practically non-existent'.

These final words are a quote from John-Paul II's encyclical '*The Gospel of Life*' (*Evangelium Vitae* 1995, n.56). The following quote is from the second edition of the Catechism, published in 1997 after the publication of this encyclical.

'The efforts of the state to curb the spread of behaviour harmful to people's rights and to the basic rules of civil society correspond to the requirement of safeguarding the common good. Legitimate public authority has the right and the duty to inflict punishment proportionate to the gravity of the offence. Punishment has the primary aim of redressing the disorder introduced by the offence. When it is willingly accepted by the guilty party, it assumes the value of expiation. Punishment, then, in addition to defending public order and protecting people's safety, has a medicinal purpose: as far as possible, it must contribute to the correction of the guilty party' (n. 2266).

### **Homicide** (n. 2268-2269)

It is wrong to do anything that is intended directly to bring about someone's death. It is also wrong to do something that is intended indirectly to result in another person's death, such as inducing a famine, reducing people to desperate poverty by trade injustices, forcing migration, and other ways of engineering a situation that results in the death of a certain group of people.

Sometimes, however, we intend to do one thing, but what we do results, unintentionally, in killing another (something we regret). Many factors must be considered here, but it is not always wrong to do something that is good and necessary, even if it means another person loses his or her life as a result. An obvious example is in the case of defending oneself or another against unjust aggression. Our actions have more than one result. Our intention is to defend ourselves or others against unjust aggression, not to take the life of the aggressor, but the situation is such that we cannot defend against aggression without killing the aggressor. If this were not morally justified we would all be passive victims of those who use force to trample over the rights of others.

**Abortion** (n. 2270-2275)

The Catechism summarises the teaching of the Church on abortion: the direct termination of the life of a pro-embryo/embryo/foetus. The zygote (fertilised egg) contains in its 46 chromosomes the blueprint of an individual human being (unless it be more than one human being as with monozygotic twins). The occurrence of monozygotic twins has led some to suggest that individuation does not occur till 14-15 days after fertilization, when a group of cells, called the ‘primitive streak’ differentiates. This leaves some doubt as to when we may speak of an individual human being. Uncertainty, however, demands that we act cautiously, and so, in the light of present knowledge, the zygote is to be assumed to be human from the moment of conception.

It is wrong to state that the developing pro-embryo – embryo – foetus is simply a ‘part of the woman’s body’, and that as a consequence she alone has the right to decide what to do with it. On the contrary, it is a distinct being, it is human (in the earliest, most vulnerable stage), and while in the womb it is completely dependent upon the mother for life. Not wanting the pregnancy to continue does not justify terminating the life of (killing) the embryo-foetus. No human being is as defenceless as an unborn child, yet none is at greater risk. Statistically, the most dangerous place for a human being in our country, and in many others, is a mother’s womb. A society that respects life will do everything to support the mother, during and after the pregnancy, and, if necessary, to provide alternative ways for care of the child once it is born (such as adoption).

There are, however, situations where the life of a pregnant woman is endangered. One example is an ectopic pregnancy; another is a cancerous womb. In such situations the ‘principle of the two-fold effect’ is to be applied. In a situation in which the foetus is not yet able to survive outside the womb, but the mother will lose her life if the pregnancy is not terminated, it is immoral to jeopardise both lives. If, for example, removing a cancerous womb can save the mother’s life, this is the thing to do. Unfortunately, the life of the foetus is terminated, but the death of the mother would mean the death of the foetus anyhow. One’s intention is to save the mother’s life. The death of the foetus is a distressing and unintended result of the intervention that is essential to save the mother.

The injunction against procuring an abortion is an ancient one. Flavius Josephus (first century) in his *Against Apion* (2.25) writes:

‘The Law enjoins us to bring up all our offspring, and forbids women to cause abortion of what is begotten, or to destroy it afterward. If she does so she is a murderer of her child, by destroying a living creature and diminishing human kind.’

In a first century Christian manual, the *Didache* (2:2), we read:

‘You shall not kill the embryo by abortion, and shall not cause the newborn to perish’ (quoted Catechism n. 2271).

This is repeated in the *Epistle of Barnabas* 19.5 (towards the end of the first century), in the *Epistle to Diognetus* 5.6 (c.200), and by Tertullian (died 220) in his *Apologeticus* 9. Automatic excommunication is incurred by anyone who procures an abortion (Catechism n. 2272).

## Euthanasia

The Australian Bishops issued the following statement in 1980:

‘To every woman who has had an abortion, Christ offers his pardon and peace ... They are often victims of fear or social pressure. Many are tormented with guilt at the memory of what they have done. But Christ preached again and again of his willingness to pardon every sinner who turns to him in true repentance. Abortion is a great sin; but, as with every other sin, Christ died to atone for it. He himself told us that there is joy in heaven over every sinner who repents. He came to save sinners. To that company we all belong. Abortion does not fall beyond the merciful providence of God: God’s tender mercies are over all God’s works ... For once a human life is conceived, it is irrevocably destined for ultimate immortality. Abortion denies to a human being a time of conscious life on earth, but does not simply blot it out of existence. Immortal by their very nature, innocent of personal sin to regret or to be punished for, these little ones go to be cradled in the everlasting arms of a loving God. And we are not forbidden to hope that they may spend eternity with their parents who, if they have repented and received God’s ready forgiveness, will be free to love them forever.’

### **Euthanasia** (n. 2276-2279)

Euthanasia is the deliberate hastening of someone’s death with the intention of alleviating that person’s suffering. Euthanasia may be performed by doing something that has the intended result of hastening death, or by refraining from doing something that would sustain life. It is not euthanasia to withhold or withdraw futile or overly burdensome treatment. It is not euthanasia to administer treatment with the intention of relieving symptoms, while accepting that the treatment may hasten death. A person is not morally obliged to prolong the process of dying through use of extraordinary means. Patients have the right to have their decisions about treatment respected, and are not obliged to burden their family with unreasonable financial or other considerations. Only reasonable treatment is morally obligatory and the decision remains with the patient. The patient is the one who bears responsibility for the treatment. In choosing to decline further treatment, the patient is not choosing to remain ill, or to die. He/She is deciding that the treatment is too burdensome, and therefore not obligatory. For treatment to be justified it must be respectful of the patient as a person, life-giving (either quality or quantity), and reasonable (dependent on the circumstances).

A further consideration concerns the relationship between euthanasia and the law. That something is judged to be morally wrong does not automatically mean that there must be a law forbidding it and sanctions enacted for contravening the law. The common good must be considered, and the bad effects of punishing immoral behaviour may outweigh its good effects. However, law does have an educative role in forming attitudes. If euthanasia is decriminalised, voluntary euthanasia may lead to involuntary euthanasia (murder). We need to ask how the law can defend a vulnerable patient from choosing death rather than ‘being a burden’ on loved ones. The lessening of the need for palliative care may appeal to some governments as saving expense. One has to ask whether decriminalising euthanasia might create a climate of fear among the elderly and vulnerable.

**Suicide** (n. 2280-2283)

Let us begin our reflections with some statements by Patty Fawkner in *Inform* n. 48, 1996, a publication of the Catholic Adult Education Centre Sydney. She writes:

‘The reasons why people suicide are almost endless. Part of the agony for loved ones is that they may never know precisely why. But there are some recognised trigger situations – family breakdown, poor self-image, the pressure to achieve, physical and sexual abuse, money problems and unemployment ... Social analyst Richard Eckersly sees increases in youth suicide rates as a symptom of western culture’s failure to transmit a sense of belonging or purpose to youth, as well as a failure of imagination and commitment. The challenge is to have a vision of, and work to bring about environments where hope is nourished, not crushed ... Concern is shown by listening – genuinely trying to understand the person’s cares and feelings rather than by being dismissive of suicide talk or by giving false assurances that things will be better.’

Catholic teaching is that it is a grave sin to take one’s own life. At the same time the Catechism (n. 2282) reminds us:

‘Grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of hardship, suffering or torture can diminish the responsibility of the person committing suicide.’

What this means is that while we are able to resist the temptation to suicide, we are strengthened by the knowledge that it is a grave sin to take one’s own life. When a person, however, does suicide, the presumption is that he or she was not able to resist. The Church’s compassion reaches out in love to the one who has suicided and to all those affected by the tragedy.

Patty Fawkner lists a number of fallacies in people’s understanding of suicide:

Fallacy	Fact
People who talk about suicide won’t do it.	Talk about suicide is a cry for help and needs a response.
Suicide occurs without warning.	Eight out of ten people give warning signs, however veiled.
Suicidal gestures are merely “attention seekers.”	Not attention-seeking, but attention-needing.
Suicidal people are intent on dying.	They want to be relieved of their distress.
Suicide is an inherited risk; it runs in families.	There is no evidence of a genetic link. The higher incidence in families that have experienced a previous suicide may be due to inadequate support networks, or young people are following models of destructive behaviour.

## Scandal

All suicidal people are mentally deranged.

Those who contemplate taking their own life experience enormous mental and emotional pressure. This should not be confused with mental illness.

Suicide is a minor problem among the elderly.

There is a worldwide trend of increasing suicide among older people. This is the age group at greatest risk.

A suicide attempt means that the person will always entertain such thoughts.

A suicide attempt is made during a particularly stressful period. If the remainder of that high risk period can be appropriately managed, then the person can get on with life.

### **Scandal** (n. 2284-2287)

Scandal can be defined as an attitude or behaviour that leads someone else to do evil. Jesus speaks of it:

‘If any of you put a stumbling block (Greek: *skandalizo* = cause scandal) before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks (Greek: skandalon)! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!’ (Matthew 18:6-7).

Being a disciple (in Jesus’ words a ‘little one’), opening one’s heart to love others, makes a person vulnerable. To lead such a one into sin is to abuse trust. The Catechism (n. 2285) reminds us that it is especially grave when the person causing the scandal is someone in authority or in a position of trust. It reminds us, too:

‘Scandal can be provoked by laws or institutions, by fashion or opinion’ (n. 2286).

In relation to the fifth commandment, the Catechism speaks of our obligation to care for our own health and the health of others (n. 2288-2291). It also states:

‘trafficking in drugs is a scandalous practice’ (n. 2291).

It speaks (n. 2292-2296) of respect for persons in the area of scientific research:

‘Science and technology must be at the service of the human person’ (n. 2294).

‘Transplanting of organs requires informed consent’ (n. 2296).

It speaks also of the sins of kidnapping, hostage taking, terrorism and torture (n. 2297-2298), and includes the statement:

‘Except when performed for strictly therapeutic medical reasons, directly intended amputations, mutilations and sterilizations performed on innocent persons are against the moral law.’

## War & Peace

The Fifth Commandment includes respect for the dead (Catechism n. 2299-2301), and the obligation to safeguard peace (Catechism n. 2302-2306). The Catechism includes here some remarks on anger and hatred, and a long section on the obligation to avoid war (n. 2307-2317). In light of the increasingly destructive nature of modern warfare, this is an area in which the Church's teaching has toughened, without ruling war out altogether:

‘All citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war. However “as long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defence, once all peace efforts have failed” (Vatican II G&S 79§4)’ (Catechism n. 2308).

The Catechism (n. 2309) spells out the strict conditions for legitimate defence by military force. All of the following conditions apply:

- the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave and certain;
- all other means of putting an end to the aggression must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective;
- there must be serious prospects of success;
- the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.’

The Catechism adds the following considerations:

‘The evaluation of these conditions for moral legitimacy belongs to the prudential judgment of those who have responsibility for the common good’ (n. 2309).

‘Public authorities should make equitable provision for those who for reasons of conscience refuse to bear arms; these are nonetheless obliged to serve the human community in some other way’ (n. 2311).

It quotes the Second Vatican Council:

‘Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation’ (GS n. 80), and adds: ‘A danger of modern warfare is that it provides the opportunity to those who possess modern scientific weapons – especially atomic, biological, or chemical weapons – to commit such crimes’ (n. 2314).

‘The accumulation of arms far from eliminating the causes of war, risks aggravating them’ (n. 2315).

## War and Peace

‘Public authorities have the right and duty to regulate the production and the sale of arms. The short-term pursuit of private or collective interests cannot legitimate undertakings that promote violence and conflict among nations and compromise the international juridical order’(n. 2316).

See Chapter Eleven of the ‘Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church’, published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (Burns and Oates 2005), for a summary of the Church’s teaching on peace.