


UNIT THREE: HOW WE LIVE

LESSON 3: THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT: Honour Your Father and Mother

CONTENTS OF LESSON:

1. "The family is the first essential cell of human society." Pope John XXIII. [CCC2207]
2. The fourth Commandment describes the duties of parents and children, as well as authority in society:
 - i. We should honour all those to whom we owe our life, well-being, security and faith. [CCC2199, YouCat367]
 - ii. We honour our parents out of gratitude, because we have received life through them and because their authority over us comes from God. [CCC2114-15]
 - iii. Children should respect and obey their parents and care for them in their difficulties and in old age. Jesus too, though he was God, was obedient to his earthly parents. However, 'obedience towards parents ceases with the emancipation of children' [CCC2216-18]
 - iv. Parents should love their children and care for their physical and spiritual needs. When their children are adults, they should allow them to choose their own profession and spouse. [CCC2228-30]
 - v. Those in any kind of authority should serve those under them, respect their dignity and rights and act justly and wisely. [CCC2235-37]
 - vi. Citizens should respect and cooperate with authority and contribute to society by serving it, paying taxes, exercising the right to vote etc. We should pray for our leaders. Again, we should refuse obedience to demands against our conscience. [CCC2238-40, 2242]
3.  We should consciously try to put all these instructions into practice looking to Christ as our model.

REFERENCES: Exodus 20:12, 7-8. Sirach 7:27-28; Luke 2:51; Col3:21; Mt20:26,28; Acts5:29.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts; blackboard; Role-play slips for each group.

I. STARTER:

[Draw a simple sketch of a person on the blackboard.]

- Suppose that this figure represents the whole of human society. The brain could be the government, which gives orders; the hands, those who produce food and other necessities of life; the nervous system could be all those involved in communication, media etc.
- What about the cells? We know that the whole body is made up of individual cells which make up the tissues and organs of the body.

- Let's try to look at a cell from the inside. Close your eyes and imagine you are about .5 micrometers high, and you are inside a cell...

You notice a nucleus in the centre, guiding the processes in the cell. Around the cell are walls with some doors which let in only selected things, and protect the inside of the cell.

Near the nucleus there are sacs and other organelles which process the food received by the cell and send them on to give energy for all the work to be done.

While you are looking at all this, you notice something very exciting happening: you see the nucleus divide into two and move to two sides of the cell. Everything else does the same; then the roof of the wall seems to move down and you quickly move to one side... the walls close on all sides.. A new cell has been formed!

- Think about this experience. What does the inside of a cell remind you of? The question for you today is: What is the equivalent of a cell in society? If society is a body, what is the cell? Explain.



[Students discuss in pairs and then share their ideas. Bring out:]

The inside of the cell is very much like a family home. So we could say that the family could be considered the 'cell' of society, because..

1. A family is a place where every person receives their life. We all came from a family.
 2. It is the place where we receive food, shelter, care.
 3. It is through a family that new families are created. Children are born, grow up and start new families. (Like the cell divides and multiplies.)
 4. The members of a family take up different jobs and look after the welfare of the family.
 5. If families are healthy, society is healthy. (Just as the body can only be healthy if all the cells are working properly.)
 6. Where family life is disturbed, the whole society is affected. E.g. In countries where divorce rate is high, the crime rate also goes up.
- This is why Pope John XXIII said, "THE FAMILY IS THE FIRST, ESSENTIAL CELL OF HUMAN SOCIETY."

II. DEVELOPMENT:

- The 4th Commandment talks about family relationships and explains the role of parents and children. Since you and I belong to a family and most probably you will start a new family of your own at some time, it is a very relevant topic for us.
- After studying what this commandment means we will see how this can be applied in real life. You will be planning and enacting role plays, so try to take in all we study.

[Distribute handouts. Students read the quotes and attempt to answer the questions one by one. They note down the answers arrived at by the class:]

- Let's first look at the commandment from the side of children. What does God want from us?
 1. WHOM should we honour?
 - All those responsible for caring for us and teaching us: Parents first of all; Grandparents, aunts, uncles etc.; priests, teachers, employers, leaders, the government etc.
 2. WHY should we honour our parents?
 - Out of gratitude, because we have received life through them. All authority comes from God, so in a way, our parents stand in the place of God. However, they are NOT 'God'!

HOW should we honour them?

 - By respecting and obeying them; by caring for them in their difficulties and in old age. Jesus too, though he was God, was obedient to his earthly parents. The Bible tells us that when we honour our parents we will be rewarded! (Exodus 20:12)
 3. WHEN do we not have to obey our parents?
 - If they tell us to do something wrong. When we become adults. As adults we still should respect our parents and listen to their advice, but now we have to make our own decisions because we are responsible for our own lives.
- Now we'll look at the commandment from the side of parents.
 4. HOW should parents treat their children?
 - They should love and care for their needs: physical and spiritual. This means teaching them, specially about God.
 - They should respect them as human beings and allow them to freely choose their own profession and life-partner (husband/wife)

The Church specially tells us that we should forgive each other when we fail and hurt one another. This applies to everyone, parents and children.

- Last, we'll look at other kinds of authority.
5. HOW should a person in authority behave? For example, a teacher, a policeman, a school prefect, a political leader?
 - Serve those in their care. (Just like Jesus! He said, I am your master and Lord, but I came to serve, not to be served.)
 - Respect people's dignity and their rights.
 - Be wise and just in exercising their authority.
 6. HOW should we behave towards our country?
 - Respect and cooperate with the government.
 - Serve society, pay taxes, exercise our right to vote.
 - Pray for leaders.
- However, we do not have to obey the government or anyone else if the law asks us to do something morally wrong. E.g. We do not have to accept birth-control methods like sterilization. When St. Peter was told to stop preaching Christ, he answered, "We must obey God rather than men!" Thousands of Christians (including St. Peter) have suffered death rather than obey unjust orders.

III. ACTIVITY:

- Let's see if we can apply what we have learnt to real-life situations. Each group will get an open-ended situation which may happen to you. Use the guide-lines in your handouts when you plan the end of the play. We will evaluate the plays together afterwards.

[Distribute the slips with the role-plays. After about 10 minutes, groups enact the plays. A quick evaluation is carried out after each play, making sure the positive points are mentioned and appreciated. Suggestions could be made as to a how the situation could have been handled differently.]

IV. INTERIORIZATION/PRAAYER:

- Did Christ follow the 4th commandment? *[Yes!]* He was obedient to his parents. He respected authority by paying taxes and fulfilling the Law. He said, "I have come not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it!" And he set an example of servant leadership.
- Let's spend a few minutes and listen to what God is saying to us personally today. Note down:
 1. Any person you need to treat in a different way.
 2. Any change you feel you must make in your own behavior.

[After sufficient time for reflection, students could share what they have written with one other person. They could then pray for each other.]

HOME ASSIGNMENT:

⇒ Read the handout. ⇒ Share what you have learnt with your family.