

## *Thirty-First Sunday Ordinary Time*

<b>Exodus 20: 1 - 17</b> <b>V. You shall not kill</b>	<b>Deuteronomy 5: 6 - 21</b> <b>V. You shall not kill</b>
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Last week we presented some difficult cases in deciding the proper response to the Fifth Commandment. “Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others.” (See Catechism of the Catholic Church §2265) We can break the Fifth Commandment by running away from the grave duty of legitimate defense. Our failure to defend life can make us the cause of some person being killed! I suggested two very complicated situations last week: 1) the vigilante/hero and 2) the unwanted or socially distressing pregnancy. The Catholic Church has saints like Joan of Arc and Martin of Tours, both French saints, who have many of the characteristics of modern vigilantes. Saint Martin served in the Roman army for about 25 years, during the Fourth Century. Saint Joan felt called by God to wage a war against the English invasion. Listen again to the Catechism, “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 lives against the unjust aggressor.” (See §2267) The Church considers the possibility that a convicted criminal may not be reformed by imprisonment. To release such a person back into society may be sending that person into a temptation to harm again, a temptation so strong that the person cannot restrain himself or herself from killing again. This act of anticipating the future of the life of another person is dangerous. So the Catechism continues, “If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people’s safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means...” (See §2267) A vigilante is gifted in being able to anticipate, prevent, stop, and apprehend unjust aggressors. But, is the vigilante capable of correctly identifying the unjust aggressor? God uses human instruments all the time to bring new life into the world and to take life from this world. In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 8, Jesus declares a Roman Centurion to have great faith. This military officer did not resign as a military officer. His faith and his vocation in the Roman army seemed to be mutually supporting. The difficulty continues!!!