

Eighteenth Sunday Ordinary Time

Exodus 20: 1 - 17	Deuteronomy 5: 6 - 21
V. You shall not kill	V. You shall not kill

Two weeks ago we noted that the Catechism of the Catholic Church has a large set of sections devoted to the explanation of the Fifth Commandment. Yet, not one word in these sections teaches about the death of animals and trees and the entire eco-system of planet earth. There are many teachings of the Church on this topic and how this topic relates to the Fifth Commandment. One of the most recent documents is the encyclical letter by Pope Francis: *On Care For Our Common Home*, 24 May 2015. Pope Francis begins his letter by stating, “Mother Earth cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her.” (See §2) Then he begins by referencing documents that each Pope has written from the time of Pope St. John XXIII concerning our neglect of nature. He quotes Blessed Pope Paul VI from the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: “Due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying nature and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation.” Then Pope Francis mentions Pope Benedict XVI to confirm what we learned last week, namely that we must use things in accordance with the will of God. When we act contrary to the will of God in areas that concern life, (which includes all of creation), then we are acting contrary to the Fifth Commandment. “Pope Benedict asked us to recognize that the natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behavior...ultimately due to the evil notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives....The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves.” (See §6) Pope Francis quotes many sources of the Catholic Church to show that we do believe that everything has life including the rocks and the stars and the soil. “That is why the New Zealand bishops asked what the commandment ‘Thou shall not kill’ means when ‘twenty percent of the world’s population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive.’” (See §95)

How could so few words be so much work to understand? We are beginning to see that killing can happen from away in terms of physical distance and in terms of historical time.