

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
First Commandment: Believing in God

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:2-3)

Insight

What are the top priorities in your life, and how do you realize them?

It was a warm spring day, and the sun was still up as Greg left work. He decided to walk for a bit rather than go immediately into the subway for home.

Work wasn't exactly fulfilling for Greg. No matter how often he got ahead of the other associates, there was always more work and another project at which to either excel or fail. Something was definitely missing from his life.

Greg approached a beautiful, old Gothic church. The great main doors were open, so Greg decided to enter. A sign announced evening Mass was in progress. Greg slipped into the last pew next to a lady who was kneeling in prayer.

In the pew pocket, a pamphlet invited, "Want to know more about God and the Roman Catholic Church? Please call!" Greg had not been raised with religion. Looking at the rites as they unfolded, looking at the people gathered there, Greg had to admit there was something utterly beautiful going on at that altar, melting his heart. He took the pamphlet and resolved to make a phone call.

For Reflection . . .

The fundamental stance of the religious person is adoration—acknowledging God as Creator, Savior, and Lord.

How would others describe your worship of God?

What are the potential idols that tempt you to displace God?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2084–2141

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 341–349

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 442–446

Church Teaching

One True God

The First Commandment expresses there is no other god or gods but only the one true God. He created us in love. He also lovingly redeemed us and calls us to respond to his love.

Religion

The First Commandment thus promotes the virtue of religion. The Latin root for our word *religion* means "ligament." Religion and religious practice function to bind us closer to God and one another, enabling us to move through this world rightly and properly, adoring God because God alone is holy and worthy of worship, praise, and thanksgiving.

Theological Virtues

The First Commandment also calls us to cultivate the Theological Virtues of faith, hope, and charity. *Faith* is a personal belief in God, to whom we entrust our heart, mind, and soul—our entire life. It rejects everything contrary to faithfulness, such as deliberate doubt, heresy (post-baptismal denial of a religious truth that requires adherence), apostasy (total repudiation of faith), and schism (division from the pope or the Church).

Hope is confidence that God always accompanies us and draws us to eternal happiness with him, regardless of present difficulties. When we refuse the gift of hope, we fall into the sins of either presumption (I can be saved without God) or despair (I don't believe that God can help me).

Charity is a loving response to the love of God. Sins against charity include indifference, ingratitude, a tepid stance toward God, spiritual laziness, and hatred of God.