



*St. Thomas Aquinas Youth (STAY)*

# Have no other gods before me

## Outline of Events:

6:30: Dinner

7:20: Large Group with Sean leading praise and worship, Alicia giving a talk (mostly on page 3 info) and Sean giving a testimony.

7:50—  
Announcements

8:00— Small Groups

## Main Points

- The first commandment is both a positive command (pursue Good) and a negative command (avoid evil). We have the honor and privilege of worshiping God, which is done through our honor, prayer, and service, which is both exterior and interior.
- We NEED God and depend on HIM, sometimes we begin to think that we NEED or depend on others more than God, this is dangerous. God meets ALL of our five basic needs.
- Worship is different than veneration and honor. We worship God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) alone. We can show veneration and honor to created things (saints, people, even images) because they show the perfections of God and can point us to God.

## Lesson Content

The Basics	2
Positive and Negative Commands	3
Our Basic Needs	4
Idolatry	5
Some Thoughts	6
Lex Orandi, Lex Credenti (Act of Adoration)	8

**“I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt not have strange gods before me.”**

**“The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.”**

### Basic Catechesis (from Fr. John Hardon, S.J.)

#### **The first commandment is both a positive law and negative law**

It is positive in that it obliges us (we have the honor and responsibility) to practice the virtue of religion. It is negative in that it forbids all sins contrary to the virtue of religion.

In elementary school my friends and would sometimes say, “I can’t do that it is against my religion.” Of course we would say it about silly things such as trading a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for a candy bar. The point is that our religion requires things (these are opportunities God give us to grow close to him) and forbids things (these are obstacles that would keep us from him).

Many people say they are for relationship NOT religion. The fact is that religion, if it is good, builds relationship. It builds relationship with God by pursuing good (positive law) and avoiding evil (negative law). We have both positive law and negative law in civil laws as well. For example you may drive when you are 16 (positive, in that you are giving the opportunity and responsibility) and you must not drive over 25 miles an hour in a school zone (negative law, your are forbidden to do something, because it might harm you and others.) Even civil laws protect relationships but permitting good and forbidden that which could bring harm.

#### **Justice is a theological virtue that gives to others what they are due.**

How can we give God what He is due, what He deserves? God deserves our worship and God is the only one due worship because He alone is the Creator while all others where created by Him.

How do we worship God?

**Adoration**—Adoration is the utmost HONOR and respect. With this honor we recognize and acknowledge God’s infinite perfections, His supreme dominion over all creation and our total dependence on Him. He is our God and we are His people.

**Prayer**—Is to lift our hearts and minds to God. Prayer is communication with God. What are we then communicating? God wants to hear from us for us to acknowledge His existence and our complete reliance on Him. He wants us to thanks Him for past favors received and to beg His mercy for having of-fended Him by sin. He wants us to ask Him for all the graces that we and others need. We should pray as much as possible.

**Sacrifice**—Sacrifice is the surrendering, or handing over of something that is precious for the love of God. Once again to sacrifice means that we are expressing our complete trust and dependence on God. Sacrifices can be both external and internal. An external sacrifice is when we give up something we like. For example I really like always having a boyfriend or girlfriend because it feels comfortable and cool, but I have going to give up what I like and not date anyone for a year so that I can focus more on several friends and knowing myself better. An internal sacrifice is when we not only give up the thing physically but we also give up that things affection in our heart. For example I am not dating anyone but have a crush on someone and have not given up the affection of my heart for this person.

John 12:25-26—Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life. If a man serves me, he must follow me.”

## The Positive and Negative (from Fr. John Hardon, S.J.)

### Positive (What we are to do) - pursue Good

- We have the privilege to Worship God (He does not have to allow us to do this)
- One way we worship is Adoration (God allows us to recognize and show him honor)
- One way we worship is Prayer (God allows us to have communication with Him)
- One way we worship is Sacrifice (God expects not only our recognition and communication but our very body (actions) and soul (thought and desires). We can give Him ourselves and He accepts us!

### Negative (What we are not to do) - avoid what is not Good

- Superstition—this is an improper manner of worship, so it would be improper adoration, prayer and sacrifice based on false revelations of God (a false view of who God is). For example: Someone says the same prayer, in the same way, at the same time every day out of fear that God is so strict that He will be displeased if they perform one little aspect of the prayer wrong.
- Vain Observance—this is an attempt to try to obtain from creature what only the Creator, God can give. For example: Someone tries to get power through magic or satanism. Magicians and satan were both created by God so they are creatures. Only God is all powerful and only God can give power in proportion to what He wills is best. Satan can promise power but, he can not give it, because he is not the source of power.
- Idolatry—Giving to a creature, the honor that is due only to God. One of the greatest honors we give to God is the acknowledgment that He is our source, our help and that we are dependent on Him. It can be extremely easy to choose creatures (people, governments, programs, ourself, money, jobs, bosses, hobbies) as the main source and help of our life and show our dependence on them. When this dependence on those things becomes greater than our dependence on God when have replaced God. Deuteronomy 18:9-12 says, “You must not fall into the habit of imitating the detestable practices of the nations...the man who does these things is detestable to Yahweh your God.”
- Secularism—form of idolatry that claims that this world is the only one worth living for.
- Hedonism—form of idolatry that makes earthly pleasure (if it feels good do it) the only aim or goal.
- Atheism—form of idolatry that denies God and looks to man’s happiness in this life and not in the life to come
- Relativism—form of idolatry that depends on man to determine right and wrong based on the situation rather than on God’s absolute truth and constancy on issues of what is Good and that which lacks goodness, evil.
- Tempting God—to say or do something that tries to find out if God is all wise, almighty, merciful, etc. Jesus was tempted but satan to jump from the temple to test God and see if He would spare His life. This is a lack of trust in God.
- Sacrilege—is a dishonor or ill treatment toward a person, place or thing dedicated to God. All those baptized our dedicated to God and claimed for Christ, this is why love of neighbor is so important and all mankind is a child of God, thus made in the image of God. Places such as churches, cemeteries, altars, shrines are dedicated to God and things such as sacramental, crucifixes, medals, holy water, etc are things dedicated to God. We must therefore show respect in honor to these person, places and things due to the fact that they are dedicated to God.
- Simony—To refuse to share the Sacraments or the service of supernatural benefits of the Church expect for a price. Priest can not charge for Confession or for any spiritual benefit / sacrament that the Church offers.

## Our Basic human needs!

Diagram of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

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1. Food, Drink
  2. Shelter, Safety
  3. Love/Belonging (Friendship)
  4. Esteem (Status; Success)
  5. Actualization (To be who you are meant to be)

By worshiping God we recognize and acknowledge God's infinite perfections, His supreme dominion over all creation and our total dependence on Him. All people need the five things above. The question is ultimately what is the source of these things. For those who believe in God, God is the source and the one and only source. Take a sandwich and sweet tea for example. The sandwich and tea come from a restaurant (is the restaurant the source, NO); the bread, meat, cheese, tea bags, etc. come from the grocery store where the owner of the restaurant bought them (is the store the source, NO); The store bought them directly from the manufacture, the butcher, the cheese maker, etc. (is the manufacture the source, NO); the butcher and cheese maker had to go to the cow, (so the cow is the source, NO); God created the cow so God is ultimately the source and the one we thank and depend on.

In the same way we sometimes say that money can get us anything, as if money was the source, but where does money come from. Money comes from my employer and God ultimately gives us the skills and opportunity to work. Money is not an end, it is only a means to an end. "Creed" a band once wrote in their lyrics, "only in America, we print on our god, In God we trust."

It is obvious that God gives us 1 and 2; this is why we pray, "give us this day our daily bread" This is why it is also a work of mercy to "feed the hungry", "clothe the naked", "shelter the homeless". God calls us, His people, His Church to do His will and help meet the needs of our neighbor.

### How is God also the source of numbers 3, 4 and 5?

Friendship—Love of God, love of Neighbor, only in God can true friendship take place with God and neighbor. Jesus is the perfect example of friendship, there is no greater love than to lay down your life for a friend.

Status/Success—God does not call us to be successful but faithful, but ironically when we are faithful first we are successful in the eyes of God because we accomplish His holy will.

Actualization—this is our vocation, our calling by God. We can only be happy by doing the will of God in our life. This is our call by baptism, strengthened by Confirmation and nourished by the Eucharist.

## Idolatry Condemned by the Church (from Catholic Answers)

### 787AD—The Council of Nicaea

“The one who redeemed us from the darkness of idolatrous insanity, Christ our God, when he took for his bride his holy Catholic Church...promised he would guard her and assured his holy disciples saying, “I am with you every day until the consummation of this age.”...To this gracious offer some people paid no attention; being hoodwinked by the treacherous foe they abandoned the true line of reasoning...and they failed to distinguish the holy from the profane, asserting that the icons of our Lord and of his saints were no different from the wooden images of satanic idols.”

### 1566AD—Catechism of the Council of Trent

Idolatry is committed “by worshipping idols and images as God, or believing that they possess any divinity or virtue entitling them to our worship, by praying to, or reposing confidence in them.”

### 1994AD—Catechism of the Catholic Church section 2114

“Idolatry is a perversion of man’s innate religious sense. An idolater is someone who ‘transfers his indestructible notion of God to anything other than God.’”

The Church absolutely recognizes and condemns the sin of idolatry. What anti-Catholic fail to recognize is the distinction between thinking a piece of stone or plaster is a god and desiring to visually remember Christ and the saints in heaven by making statues in their honor.

In Catholic tradition there are many examples of this:



There is a legend that the picture of Our Lady and her Son at the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa (the icon to the right), was painted by St. Luke on a tabletop made by Jesus himself when he was an apprentice carpenter to St. Joseph. Hidden during the early persecutions, it was brought by St. Helena (255-330) to Constantinople. In the troubled eighth century it was stealthily taken from the city to a forest in Eastern Poland. From there it was removed to Czestochowa. In 1430 a great Gothic cathedral was built around the precious relic, but in the war with the Hussites they stole the picture. When their horses refused to move their cargo beyond the village boundaries, they threw the picture by the roadside, where it lay broken. All attempts to repair the damage have failed. A soldier tried to destroy the image with his sword which left marks under Mary’s right eye. The image was not destroyed and also the marks have not been able to be repaired. The Polish people

believed that their welfare was identified with this miraculous picture. When the Turks were at the gates of Vienna, Sobieski (1624-96), the Polish king, dedicated his crusade to Mary, and the West was saved. Under Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) the people came secretly on their pilgrimages to Czestochowa, and in 1945, at the end of WWII, they came 500,000 strong to thank Mary for their liberation. In 1947 over 1,500,000 came there to beg Mary to save them from Communism. Public pilgrimages to Czestochowa were forbidden during this time but the shrine was still unharmed. Another example of a miraculous image is Our Lady of Guadalupe. Our Lady appeared in 1531 to San Juan Diego and left on his tilma (cloak), the image of herself, which has is still able to be seen today.

With these holy images and all icons, statues, medals, we must remember that they point us to something greater. In the case of both Our Lady of Czestochowa and Our Lady of Guadalupe they remind us of God’s mercy and protection and our ever needed dependence on Him. We should honor and reverence creatures and created things that reflect the perfections of God. Thus we venerate saints and images and honor and love persons on earth; but WE DO NOT DORE THEM!!!

## Some Thoughts... (Small/Large Group options)

- Are we ready in our life to declare that God is both our LOVE and our LORD? How can we do that?  
**How do you prove your love for someone?** - we prove to them, show them, give them our affection  
**How do you prove that someone is your Lord, Authority?** - you show, give, prove your submission to them  
 This showing proving, showing, giving affection and submission is our Adoration of God.  
**What is the primary way we show and give our affection and submission to another?** Through our words.  
 Our words to God is our prayer. We tell Him things, we thank Him, ask Him for things, beg for His mercy and express our love.  
**What is even more important than words?** Our actions, which are our sacrifices that we can make daily putting our words (prayers) into practice.

It is true that we tell other people things, thank others, ask others for things, beg others and express our love for others. **When do our words and actions toward others cross the line, where we are replacing God with them? Give examples of how we could talk to others more than God? Thanks others more than God? Ask others for things and even express our love for others more than God?**

- Ask your group if they know how a battery works.  
 If you look at any battery, you'll notice that it has two terminals. One terminal is marked (+), or positive, while the other is marked (-), or negative. In an AA, C or D cell (normal flashlight batteries), the ends of the battery are the terminals. In a large car battery, there are two heavy lead posts that act as the terminals. Electrons collect on the negative terminal of the battery, the electrons will flow from the negative to the positive terminal when connect by a wire or some type of connector and when then conduct electricity / energy. Both the positive and negative terminals are essential. How are both positive laws (what we have the honor of doing) and negative laws (what we are to avoid) both essential to our lives? See if you group can come up with a list of as many positive commands and negative commands as possible. For example: positive can be going to Mass on Sunday, Sacramental Marriage, receiving the Grace of Confirmation, supporting the dignity of all life, praying daily. For example: negative can be don't have sex until marriage, don't steal, don't lie, don't cheat, don't hang around the wrong crowd.

Most likely the group will come up with more negative commands than positive. Ask you group why they think that is. Also ask your group if they even knew there were two types of commands. Why would God give us two types? This goes back to the basic rule of the Gospel, which is two fold: Pursue Good; Avoid Evil.

- Here is a quick test to see if you have put anything before God. Saint Bernard says the following:

**Thoughts lead to Pleasure**  
**Pleasure leads to Consent (saying Yes in your mind and heart)**  
**Consent leads to Action**  
**Action leads to Habit**  
**Habit leads to Necessity**

When we worship God we are saying, I honor you, I love you, I NEED YOU!!! God is truly the only thing we ultimately need because he is the source of all our physical and spiritual needs. We can't put any other need before God. Here are two examples:

- I think how good it must feel to use drugs, I say to myself if I was offered drugs I would use them, you are put in a situation where you are offered and you do use them, the action becomes a habit and then you need drugs. You now have elevated drugs to the level of a NEED, a level that only God should be at.
- I have the thought of being popular, this though brings me pleasure, I think I will do anything to be popular, to be liked, I then begin to ACT in ways that will cause me to be liked and popular even if they go against my faith, These actions become habit, the habit then becomes a need to continue to impress and even live for these friends and the life style I created for myself.

What are some other examples?

## Some Thoughts... (Small/Large Group options)

4. Take a look at page six, which talks about the basic needs of every human and how God is ultimately the source of all those needs. Also at the bottom there are some questions that can be answered in a group setting.
5. God never asks us to do something that He doesn't give us the Grace to do. If God asks us to "worship Him" alone He will then give us the gifts necessary to obey.

Of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord which helps us most worship God? Keep in mind that worship of God is honoring God, talking to God and serving God. How does each gift help us to do these things? Is there one give that might help the most in regard to worship?

Wisdom—helps us love things that are eternal

Understanding—gives us knowledge of religion

Counsel—helps us to please God

Fortitude—helps us overcome any obstacle that oppose our salvation

Knowledge—help me to know the ways (will) of God

Piety—helps us to find the service of God sweet and pleasing

Fear of the Lord—helps us to dread displeasing God

6. In the Lex Orandi, Lex Credenti section, page 8, you can read the Act of Adoration prayer as a group. It would be good to go through page 2 first and then maybe print off this prayer and have the group underline each area that specifically deals with acts of worship. These areas fulfill the positive command of God in the first commandment. Then discuss the following:

How can praying this prayer remind us of what true worship is?

- calls God sovereign
- we acknowledge God to be our creator
- we acknowledge God to be our Lord
- we tell God that we need Him, he is our first beginning and our last end
- we show him homage (honor) of our being (thoughts, desires) and live (actions)
- we submit to His will
- we devote ourselves to His service

7. Public worship includes Mass, Adoration and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Processions, Public prayer in a group such as a rosary, liturgy of hours, etc.

What are some signs of our public worship? Kneeling, genuflecting, making the sign of the cross, vocal and community prayers, singing of hymns, listening to sermons.

Does the manner in which we perform these signs say anything about our worship, our exterior worship, our interior worship?

8. Page 8 address in a very quick manner the difference between worship (for God alone) and reverence, honor, veneration (of created things which give God glory). This could lead to some good discussion.
9. We should avoid all singularity and exaggerations when we worship. For example, if we are in a crowded restaurant it would be out of place to stand conspicuously, make the sign of the cross, and say grace. The Angelus is a prayer prayed at 6am, Noon and 6pm. It would be ridiculous if you heard the 12:00 bell at school to stop, kneel down in the middle of the hallway at school and pray there. We must be mindful that our worship is cheerful and full of joy but not to showy. If our worship is to showy people will feel distant from it and could hold it in contempt, believing to it be insincere, fake or a statement that we are holier than them.

## **Lex Orandi, Lex Credenti (Prayer and Belief)**

### **Act of Adoration**

**O Great God, the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth,  
I prostrate myself before Thee.**

**With all the Angels and Saints I adore Thee,  
I acknowledge Thee to be my Creator and sovereign Lord,  
my first beginning and last end.**

**I render to Thee the homage of my being and life.**

**I submit myself to Thy Holy Will,  
and I devote myself to Thy divine service this day and for ever.**