

SUNDAY CATECHISM / 16

## Abide by God

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**Luisella  
Scrosati**

# Sunday Catechism



As we have seen previously, the act of faith is divided into several elements: credo Deum, credo ad Deum and credo in Deum.

- **I BELIEVE THAT GOD ...** is the expression of faith, of the existence of God, of the unity of God

- **I BELIEVE GOD**

, is the formal reason for the Faith

- **I BELIEVE IN GOD**, which indicates the act of adherence

The most powerful content of the first article of Faith is the following: to understand that the adherence of the people of Israel and then the Church to the one and only true God did not come about through study, but due to a very specific historical experience. In particular, the correlative to this article, which is the first commandment, is linked to the fundamental experience of the exodus, when the people of Israel experience that not the idols, not the foreign "divinities", but the one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is the God who guarded Israel, delivered it from the hands of Pharaoh and now leads it into the promised land.

As Christians, we have experienced that not gods, not idols, not human powers, but only Jesus Christ, who reveals the face of God and God incarnate, frees us from the slavery of the devil and sin.

God's revelation is an action God takes towards mankind, which in turn requests mankind to give a response back to God. Mankind adheres to God, recognising Him as the only true God who intervenes in history and the only destination at the end of life.

In adhering to the one true God, mankind's vocation and realisation as an individual, as a people and in history are at stake. Under no circumstance should the importance of this first article of Faith and its related first commandment be misunderstood or underestimated.

By the recognition of the one true God and the total adherence of mankind as an individual, and as a society to this one God who reveals Himself, lies the heart of all human life. And clearly by disregarding or not understanding correctly, or not considering this first article of the faith and the first commandment, means condemning mankind as individuals, as a society, and as nations, to a derailment that inevitably leads to the sensational failure of one's vocation, leads to a temporal and eternal unhappiness, leads to the failure of the project of building persons, and to a world without God. This is exactly the great attack against the faith taking place today, it's an attack on the first commandment and the first article of faith.

This pivot of faith, without which everything else collapses, has its "negative" correlative in the first commandment. What does this mean? Our adhering to God and dedicating ourselves to Him has a point beyond which we cannot go, and it is precisely the prohibition that we find in the text of the first commandment.

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me."You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me." (Exodus 20, 2-5)

If we take the Catechism of the Catholic Church, starting from number 2084, we find that this first commandment is articulated in a truly far-sighted way, in part taking up all the aspects of this commandment found in the Roman Catechism.

The first negative aspect of this commandment, "not, not, not ..." is always true, permits no exceptions and is the element that protects the essential order, excluding everything that can attack or threaten it. This is the meaning of the negative commandment, which implies the condemnation of a series of elements listed from number 2110 onwards in the Catechism.

These doomed attitudes are:

- **superstition**
- **idolatry**
- **divination and magic**
- **irreligion**
- **atheism**
- **agnosticism**

Then there is the "positive" aspect of this commandment, which asks for adherence to God. In particular, this adherence in the Catechism is expressed by three sub-chapters, in which life is explained respectively in the theological virtues (faith, hope and charity) the acts proper to religion (adoration, prayer, sacrifice, vows); and finally the explanation of the prohibition of making images of God.

The Catechism, in explaining the first commandment, speaks above all of the need for the believer, for the person, to live a theological life. What does that mean?

When God reveals Himself for who He is, necessarily mankind's adequate action towards God is faith, hope and charity.

From number 2087 to 2089 of the Catechism, we see how mankind accepts and welcomes all that God, being the supreme wisdom, the uncreated truth, reveals to him. Faith is therefore the adequate response to God who reveals Himself; the theological virtue of Faith thus sets in motion all mankind's capacities so that he may know God, His laws, His commandments.

Furthermore, before God who reveals Himself as the source of life, as the saviour, as the true hope of mankind, mankind responds precisely with the theological virtue of hope (2090-2092). This revelation of God leads mankind to place his hope in Him, in His grace and to desire Him as his true and only good.

Finally, before God who reveals Himself, who gives Himself and who loves mankind, mankind responds with the theological virtue of charity (2093-2094): loving God above everything and everyone and in all things is the just response to God's revelation and to the love that God gives to mankind.

Faith, hope and charity are theological virtues,

There are also the so-called moral virtues, and in particular the virtue of religion which is another modality of adequate response to God.

What are the proper acts of the virtue of religion?

- **ADORATION:** the act by which mankind abandons itself entirely to God and recognises God and itself for what it is. It is a loving submission to God who presents Himself as the almighty, as the highest good, while mankind recognises that it comes from nothing and that its own being and all that is good comes entirely from God.

- **PRAYER:** the elevation of one's gaze, desire, heart and mind to God.

- **SACRIFICE:** an offering made to God as a sign of adoration and recognition of his majesty. It is something that mankind deprives itself of, even to the complete offering of its whole self.

- **VOWS and Promises:** are the sign of our devotion to God, to whom we make

promises that we keep.

If these are the acts which are due to God with the theological virtues (FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY) and moral virtues (THE VIRTU 'OF RELIGION: WORSHIP, PRAYER, SACRIFICE, VOWS AND PROMISES), it means that these acts are not only adequate for God and due to Him, but it also means that they are be given only to Him alone.

Whenever we express the above acts towards someone or something that is not God, we are going against the first commandment.

The way the Catechism presents the first commandment is therefore very rich and together with the first article, is the cornerstone of the Faith.