

My Catholic Morals! Study Group

Session 3 - Loving God

Pre-meeting Prep

Participants should be asked to read Chapter Three of the *My Catholic Morals!* book prior to this meeting.

5 minutes - Gather

Snacks and informal social time as people arrive. Try to be punctual and gather everyone together no longer than 5 minutes after the scheduled starting time.

5-10 minutes - Opening prayer and Scripture

Everyone sits quietly as the leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and then invites a period of silence in the following way:

Let us quiet ourselves as we begin this study of our glorious Catholic morals together. "Lord, as we sit here for a minute in silence, help each one of us to bring our own questions, concerns, fears, and joys to You. Help us, in this moment of silence, to be attentive to Your gentle voice speaking to us, directing us, and calling us to a deeper faith."

Take about a minute in silence with eyes closed so that each person can speak to our Lord about their own particular cares and concerns.

Leader reads the following invitation:

Let us ponder the Word of God. Let us reflect upon our own faith journey with the following questions: Do I believe? How deep is my faith? Am I open to letting God speak to me? Am I open to the Word of God and willing to let God's truth sink in more deeply? Am I willing to let this new faith change my life?

The leader of the session prayerfully reads the following Scriptures, one at a time, pausing for about 30 seconds between each verse:

Exodus 2:2-5: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them.

Matthew 4:10: It is written: "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."

Exodus 20:7: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Matthew 5:33-34: You have heard that it was said to the men of old, “You shall not swear falsely....” But I say to you, Do not swear at all.

Exodus 20:8-10: Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work.

Mark 2:27-28: The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.

Leader then says: ***Let us take a moment in silence to reflect upon these words.*** (a minute of silence)

The Leader invites everyone to pray silently as the leader prays the following prayer out loud:

Lord, help me to love You with my whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. Help me to honor You in the ways You have laid out for me and to keep You at the center of my life. May I always keep Sunday as a holy day, dedicated to You and always be faithful to my attendance at Mass. May I honor You both with my words and my actions, and may I learn to love You more deeply each and every day of my life.

Amen.

The prayer time concludes with everyone professing the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

45-50 minutes - Discussion questions

Each person should be invited to share something or ask a question if he/she chooses, regarding the questions/discussion starters below. Go through one question at a time, and give each person an opportunity to say something if he/she chooses. Avoid having one or two persons dominate the discussion. Go around the circle and do not be afraid to share! Your insights might assist someone else in their understanding of the topics. Your question might very well be the same question someone else has. Some of the questions below will invite a personal sharing; other questions will invite you to share with others what you read in Chapter Three. The goal is to share personally and to make sure that the faith of our Church is clearly expressed and understood by all.

1. First Commandment:
 1. We are called to love God with our whole being. Discuss ways in which this high calling is achieved through adoration, prayer, sacrifice, promises & vows, and religious liberty
 2. This Commandment forbids every way in which we act contrary to the law of God by putting false gods before Him. Discuss any of these ways this Commandment is broken that stand out to you: superstition, idolatry, divination & magic, irreligion, atheism, and agnosticism.
 3. The best way to keep this Commandment is to grow in the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. Discuss ways in which these virtues fulfill the high calling of the love of God.
2. Second Commandment:
 1. Discuss the various ways that this Commandment is broken through swearing: casual speech, habit, in anger, or by swearing an oath in God's name.
 2. Do you think much about the "high calling" of this Commandment? We are called not only to avoid swearing, we are called to a deep respect for God and His holy name. What are some ways you can practically fulfill this mission in your life?
 3. How does this Commandment apply to the way we treat, speak about, and speak to others?
3. Third Commandment:
 1. What is the difference between the Sabbath Day of the Old Testament and the way that Christians currently fulfill it on the "Eighth Day?"
 2. Why are there Holy Days of Obligation? Why should we go to Mass on these days?
 3. Discuss the challenge many face in faithful Mass attendance on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
 4. What are the duties of "rest" on the Sabbath? Speak about cultural influences and how societal practices tend to infringe upon the sacredness of the day of rest. What can be done about this?

4. With all three of the Commandments discussed, revisit any particular sins committed in the light of our Church's teaching on mortal sin: Grave matter, full knowledge, and complete consent of the will.
 1. How do you see these three factors affecting sins that are committed widely today in our culture?
 2. What can you do to make sure that you do not fall into these sins in a mortal way?

20 minutes - Final Reflections and sharing

Go around and give each person an opportunity to share what may have stood out the most to them from the discussion or what left them the most confused, so as to gain further clarity or insight from others.

5 minutes - Closing prayer:

Leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and invites a minute of silence with all eyes closed. Each person should reflect upon what was discussed, especially what stood out to him/her the most.

Leader then prays the following prayer:

Lord, we thank You for the sharing and discussion we had this day. Help each of us to take from this discussion the message You want us to hear. May Your voice be clear, and may each of us have the courage and wisdom we need to fulfill our high calling of love.

Jesus, I trust in You.

Leader then invites everyone present to offer their own prayer in the following way (Note: This can be done out loud, but it might be preferable if it's done in silence at the discretion of the leader):

Let us now each bring our own personal concerns before our Lord, trusting that He hears us and knows all we need. Let us entrust these prayers to Him with full confidence that He desires to take control.

(Take a minute of silence for each person to speak to God about their own personal needs).

Leader then invites everyone to close with the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be.