



## HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Remind students to read the next two sections of this chapter, “The Second Commandment” on pp. 179–180 and “The Third Commandment” on pp. 181–183.

- ◆ **Superstition, divination, and magic.** Faith in the one true God acknowledges that he is in control. Superstition, on the other hand, is a false religious practice that claims certain external acts or practices (e.g., the presence of certain objects or the recitation of certain words) can automatically bring about the desired outcome independent of God’s will or one’s own interior disposition, like a faithful or loving heart.

Divination seeks to unveil what God wants hidden (occult). It takes many forms: calling up the power of Satan and the demons, conjuring the dead, consulting horoscopes, reading the stars (astrology), palm reading, consulting mediums, playing with Ouija boards, and the like. All these practices dishonor and disrespect a loving God who is in control of our futures. They are also arrogant practices that surrender our freedom to some external power or force, failing to trust in a loving Father who knows what is best for us.

Magic (not to be confused with the tricks of professional entertainers who seek to amuse us with their sleight of hand and other skills) seeks to control the future by trying to harness occult (hidden) powers to gain an advantage over others. *Sorcery* is “black magic” that tries to get results using demonic powers. It is extremely dangerous to religious faith and most condemnable when sought to harm others. *Spiritism*, summoning the ghosts of the dead, usually involves divination (seances and mediums) or the practices of sorcery. The Church strongly warns us against all these practices because they open the way to a fascination with evil spirits. These practices are in opposition to the one true God, who has our welfare at heart and guides us in his own way with the help of prayer. These practices also open us to grand deception from unscrupulous people who are trying to gain profit or power over us.

- ◆ **Irreligion.** This offense leads to the sins of tempting God, sacrilege, and

simony. We tempt God, in word or deed, when we ask God to prove his almighty power or goodness. Asking God to prove himself to us, as Satan did when he asked Jesus to cast himself down from the Temple, profoundly disrespects our loving God and distrusts his providential care. Sacrilege profanes, or treats unworthily, the sacraments, other liturgical actions, and persons, places, or things consecrated to God. Sacrilege is seriously wrong especially when committed against our Lord in the holy Eucharist. Simony consists of buying or selling spiritual goods. God’s gifts to us—like his forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation—are freely given graces. They cannot be bought and sold like a commodity. We should receive them with humble gratitude.

- ◆ **Atheism and agnosticism.** An atheist denies God’s existence. An agnostic claims ignorance about God’s existence (from the Greek *agnostikos* for “not knowing”), saying it cannot be proved. Therefore, an agnostic “decides not to decide,” often out of indifference or laziness. In effect, most agnostics are “practical” atheists.

Modern non-belief in God takes many forms: **humanism**, which makes humanity its god, the be-all and end-all of existence; **Marxist communism**, which makes the economic or social order the sole source of human freedom; **Freudianism**, which claims belief in God is mere wishful thinking; **materialism**, which affirms that the physical, material world is the only reality and denies any spiritual existence; plus a host of other ways that renounce God’s existence.

One problem with atheism is the false belief that faith in God thwarts human freedom and dignity. On the contrary, human dignity is grounded and perfected in God. To abandon belief in God opens us up to many false gods. G. K. Chesterton reputedly said, “A man who won’t believe in God will believe in anything.” How true this was in the twentieth century, when certain atheistic philosophies made

### divination

Attempts to unveil what God wants hidden by calling up demonic powers; consulting horoscopes, the stars, or mediums; palm reading, etc.

### sacrilege

Profane or unworthy treatment of the sacraments; other liturgical actions; and persons, places, and things consecrated to God.

### simony

The buying or selling of spiritual goods.

### humanism

A belief that defies humanity and human potential to the exclusion of any belief in or reliance on God.

### materialism

A belief that the physical, material world is the only reality, and that spiritual existence, values, and faith are illusions.

- ◆ What are some superstitions you have observed? Comment on them in light of the above.
- ◆ Is it okay to read the daily astrology charts in the newspaper? Would it be wrong to take them seriously? Explain.
- ◆ Why do you think interest in the occult is so keen in our day? Are people searching for some spiritual meaning? Explain.

## RESOURCES

### Internet Resources

**Bellitto, Christopher M.** “The Sunday Zone: Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy,” *Catholic Youth Update*.

[www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/YU/ay0301.asp](http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/YU/ay0301.asp)

**McBride, Father Alfred, O.Praem.** “Love God: The First Three Commandments.”

Good reading for teens from Youth Update.

[www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/YU/ay0802.asp](http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/YU/ay0802.asp)

**Catholic Encyclopedia** “Ten Commandments”

[www.newadvent.org/cathen/04153a.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04153a.htm)

**Tighe, Mike.** “It’s the 10 Commandments: Just Say ‘Yes,’” *Catholic Youth Update*.

[www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/YU/ay0988.asp](http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/YU/ay0988.asp)