

# Honoring God

## Core Activity

### Putting God First

1. Assign the students to read chapter 26 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*.

2. Tell the students to get out a piece of paper and a pen or a pencil. Ask them to think about their schedules during a typical day. Have them write their schedules on their papers, detailing what they do at any given time during the day. Tell them to start with waking up in the morning and to conclude with going to bed at night.

3. After a few minutes, invite one or two students to share bits of their schedules with the class. Then ask the students each to add up the amount of time spent doing different activities (watching television, eating, sleeping, going to school, and so forth). Instruct them to use their typical schedules and the amounts of time spent doing certain activities to identify and list their top five priorities. Next encourage the students to turn to a person next to them and to share their responses to the following questions:

- Are you surprised by the results?
- Why or why not?
- Does your priorities list reflect what is really most important to you? Why or why not?

(These questions are adapted from Rick Bundschuh and Tom Finley, *High School Talksheets*, p. 46.)

4. Recruit a volunteer to read aloud the first three Commandments found in Exod. 20:2–11. Ask the class to discuss what the term “other gods” in verse 3 meant for the Israelites and what it means for us today. Point out to the students that “other gods” could include, in addition to people, things such as popularity, career, and money. List their responses on the board.

5. Direct the students to compare their lists of priorities with the list of “other gods” on the board. Ask them to evaluate whether the items in either list violate the Commandment in Exod. 20:3. If the students do not reach this conclusion on their own, be sure to let them know that the listed items are not necessarily bad, but a problem arises when they come before what is truly important: putting God first.

6. Divide the students into small groups of four to six. Invite each small group to consider its list of “other gods” and to discuss these questions:

- How can these items or situations get in the way of our loving God at all times?
- What can we do to make sure that these items don't become false gods in our lives?

Then invite each small group to share its insights with the class.

7. Instruct the students to refer to their individual priorities lists. Ask the students to raise their hands if they listed God as one of their priorities. Conduct a presentation on honoring God, drawing from the material in chapter 26 of the *CFH*.

8. Invite the students to consider whether their schedules and priorities on Sunday are different from those on another day. Ask them to review how they use God's name on an average day. Invite them to judge whether their use of God's name is respectful and prayerful.

9. Close by inviting the students to review their schedules and priorities and to plan some changes that will allow God to be not only present but a priority in their lives. Allow a few minutes for them to work on that. Then ask for one or two students to give an example of how they are going to make a change (or changes) in putting God first.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

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## Core Activity Extension

### Making Time for Prayer

Invite the students to discuss ways they can rework their daily schedules to allow more time for prayer, Scripture reading, or other activities to improve their relationship with God. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

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## Additional Activities

### Morality Plays

1. Before class write the names of vices and virtues on index cards. You will need enough cards for each student to have one. Write one vice or virtue on each card; the same name can appear on several cards, but be sure to represent a variety of virtues and vices. Consider using the following list:

- *Vices.* greed, envy, pride, sloth, deceit, gluttony
- *Virtues.* charity, humility, honesty, self-control, patience, kindness

2. Begin the activity by explaining to the students that they are going to perform small morality plays to portray the role that “false gods” play in their lives, the temptations they face, and the virtues that strengthen them to do the right thing. Give a simple explanation of morality plays, using the following description in your own words:

- In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, morality plays were popular tools for teaching Christians how to lead a good life and to avoid evil.
- The plays all had the same basic plot: good and evil competed for the human soul, and goodness won.
- The characters in morality plays personified the Christian soul as well as vices and virtues. A morality play about the importance of honesty would feature a Christian considering a lie versus the truth. The other characters in the play would be Deceit and Honesty, in human form, who would try to convince the Christian to behave one way or the other, much like the familiar image of the devil and the angel on a person’s left and right shoulder.

3. Give every student one card naming a vice or a virtue. Tell the students that you are going to read several scenarios. For each scenario they are going to act as the voices of the vices or virtues written on their cards.

Share with the young people the example of a young person at the shopping mall who is considering various items to buy. The personified vices and virtues might make these recommendations as they walk alongside the shopper:

*Greed:* We should buy all that we can; we NEED it all.

*Envy:* It’s not fair that everyone else has one and we don’t; we need to buy it because it’s only fair that we have it.

*Self-control:* Do we really need it? If we wait, we can decide whether it is something we really need or something we just want.

*Charity:* There are much better uses for our money. We don’t need to buy something just for the sake of buying it. We can save this money for Mom’s birthday present or for something for the food pantry at church.

4. Read the following scenarios to the students, and invite them to be the voices of vices or virtues for each scenario. You can also make up your own scenarios by using the “other gods” that the group listed during the core activity. Make sure that a variety of students have an opportunity to participate.

- A student has a big test tomorrow, and a classmate calls to let him know that a copy of the answer sheet is available.
- A young person receives an offer of a part-time job that requires working on Wednesday nights. Taking the job would mean she could not attend the weekly meeting of her parish’s youth group. She doesn’t need the money, but it would be nice to have it.
- A young person who has wanted to hang out with the popular crowd is invited to their party, but it is on the same night as a party with the friends he usually hangs out with.
- The church group has scheduled a trip to work at a homeless shelter on Saturday; it requires getting up early and arriving at the church by 6:00 a.m.

5. Debrief the experience by asking what the students learned from each morality play.

(This activity is adapted from Christine Schmertz Navarro, *Teaching Activities Manual for “The Catholic Youth Bible,”* p. 39.)

## A Cinquain

Have the students each create a cinquain (*sin-kane*)—a simple, five-line poem—using the following formula:

- one word that is the title of the poem
- two words that describe the title
- three words that show action
- four words that tell how you feel about the subject
- another word for the title

Tell them to use “God” as the title of the poem. Here is a sample using another title:

Children  
 fun alive  
 laughing loving playing  
 precious in God’s sight  
 Gift

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

(The questions in step 3 of the activity “Putting God First” are adapted from *High School Talksheets: Psalms and Proverbs—Updated!* by Rick Bundschuh and Tom Finley [Grand Rapids, MN: Youth Specialties, 2001], page 46. Copyright © 2001.

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