

# **Lesson 21 – The Commandments of the Church; The First and Second Commandments**

**Grades 6-8**

## **Lesson Preparation:**

Read Lesson 21 in the Baltimore Catechism. You will need to have a Bible for this session. Also, be sure to print and copy the activity sheet for the lesson.

## **Opening Prayer:**

Scripture: “When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”

Matthew 6:16-18

Leader: God, You are worthy of our worship and praise. Help us to see how the Mass, and the disciplines of fasting and abstinence can strengthen us and glorify You. Amen.

Together: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolations, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Opening:**

This lesson will be about the first and second precepts of the Church. One area students may be a little unclear on is fasting. To get them thinking, have them write, in a sentence or two, the answers to these questions: What is fasting? Is it important? Why?

Let them know that these questions will be addressed in today’s video and you will be revisiting them in the discussion part of today’s lesson. They should pay attention and, at that point, consider whether they will need to adjust their answers.

## Watch the Lesson 21 Video on Catholic Brain

**Comprehension Questions:** *Note: These questions are asked after the video, just to check student comprehension. They are not discussion questions, but be sure students understand the answers to these questions before moving on*

1) On what days are we obligated to attend Mass?

*On all Sundays and holy days of obligation.*

2) What are the six holy days of obligation?

*Christmas, Mary Mother of God (the octave of Christmas), Ascension Thursday (although some dioceses move this feast to the nearest Sunday), The Assumption, All Saints' Day, The Immaculate Conception.*

3) What is expected of us on a required fast day?

*One full meal; two smaller meals without meat that don't add up to a full meal but are enough food to maintain energy; no eating between meals. Applies to people aged 21-59.*

4) What is abstinence?

*Not eating meat.*

5) During which season does the whole Church (age 14 and above) abstain from meat on Fridays?

*Lent*

**Discussion Questions:** *Note: These questions are for student discussion. The students should consider these questions and comment on them. There are some key points included in this lesson, after each question, that you can use to help guide their discussion toward truth. It's important that the students think about and discuss these things, but that they don't leave the discussion with false impressions about what is true.*

1) Why is going to Mass important?

*It is the highest form of worship; God deserves our worship; we have a need to worship God and commemorate the important feasts of our religion.*

2) What is fasting?

*Limiting our food intake. There are required fast days and a prescription for how to fast on those days, but at other times we can make fasting of any sort a part of our spiritual practice according to our ability to do so.*

3) Why is fasting important?

*On prescribed days, it is a sign of obedience, and an offering the whole Church can make to God as a family. It is a worthy sacrificial offering at any time. It strengthens us; if we can deny ourselves something good like food for a higher purpose, it will strengthen us to resist sin when temptation arises.*

### **Go Deeper:**

The Church has authority to make precepts and set standards for the practice of the Faith for Catholics. Jesus gave that authority to the Apostles, and particularly to St. Peter. Today that authority resides with the bishops, and particularly with the pope.

Read together Matthew 16:13-20 and discuss. Pay particular attention to verse 19: “I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Jesus is giving Peter incredible authority here. In David’s kingdom, the “prime minister” would receive the keys to the kingdom, allowing him to act in the king’s name, and with the king’s authority. (Perhaps the class can read Isaiah 22:22 and note the similarity to Jesus’s words.) Every Jewish listener would have understood the authority Peter received when he received the keys to the kingdom of heaven. The second part of the verse about binding and loosing, states that the precepts the pope lays down will be honored by heaven.

### **Activity:**

Complete the attached activity sheet about the holy days of obligation. Students will match each feast with its date and a description of what the feast commemorates.

## **Closing Prayer:**

Leader: Lord, we thank You for the gift of the Church, and the precepts set down by the Church, to guide us to become better and more faithful Catholics.  
Amen.

Together: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.