



Creation

Catechism of the Catholic Church , 279-374.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 51-72.

St. Josemaria, Homily “Passionately Loving the World”, in *Conversations with Msgr. Escrivá de Balaguer* , nn. 113-23.

Creation of the Sun, Moon and Stars, Jan Brueghel the Younger, 1650..



*In the beginning God created
the heavens & the earth
(Gen 1:1).*

God the Father almighty is:

- "*Creator of heaven and earth*"
(Apostles' Creed)
- "*of all that is, seen and unseen*"
(Nicene Creed)

Creation is:

- the foundation of all God's saving plans culminating in Christ.

CATECHESIS ON CREATION SHOWS THE MEANING OF OUR LIVES

The Catechesis on creation concerns the foundations of human & Christian life. It answers the basic question that humans ask themselves:

- Where do we come from?
- Where are we going?
- What is our origin?
- What is our end?
- Where does everything that exists come from and where is it going?

The questions about the origin & the end are inseparable. They are decisive for the meaning & orientation of our life & actions (CCC, 282).





Creation, Science & the Big Questions

Scientific studies about the origins of the world & of man enrich our knowledge of:

- the age & dimensions of the cosmos
- the development of life & the appearance of humankind

Such discoveries invite *admiration* for the greatness of the Creator, prompt us to give *thanks* for all God's works & for the understanding & wisdom he gives to scholars & researchers (CCC, 283).



Creation, Science & the Big Questions

The great interest in these studies is also stimulated by another type of question. It is not only a question of knowing *when & how* the universe arose physically, or when man appeared, but rather of discovering the *meaning* of such an origin. This goes beyond the domain of science.

- Is the universe governed by chance, blind fate, anonymous necessity, or by a transcendent, intelligent & good Being called "God"?
- If the world does come from God's wisdom & goodness, why is there evil? Where does it come from? Who is responsible for it? Is there any liberation from it? (CCC, 284)



Tree Incarnation, Mark Hansen

Some Responses

- *Eg. Origin myths from ancient religions & cultures; Deep Ecology*
- *Pantheism*: Everything is God, the world is God, or the development of the world is the development of God. The world is a necessary emanation arising from God.
- *Dualism*: Two eternal principles in permanent conflict, Good v Evil, Light v Darkness. The world physical world is evil & to be rejected or left behind (*Gnosticism*).
- *Deism*: The world was made by God as by a watch-maker who, once he has made a watch, abandons it to itself.
- *Materialism*: Rejection of any transcendent origin for the world, - it is merely the interplay of matter that has always existed.
- All these attempts bear witness to the permanence and universality of the question of origins. This inquiry is distinctively human.

Sources of Knowledge about Creation

1. Human intelligence: The existence of God the Creator can be known with certainty through his works, by the light of human reason, even if this knowledge is often obscured & disfigured by error. Faith confirms & enlightens reason (CCC, 286).

2. Revelation: The truth about creation is so important that God wanted to reveal everything we need to know on the subject. God progressively revealed the mystery of creation. He revealed himself as the One to whom belong all the peoples of the earth, & the whole earth; He is the One who made heaven & earth (CCC, 287).

The revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation & forging of the covenant of the one God with his People. Creation is the first step towards this covenant, the first witness to God's all-powerful love. The truth of creation is also expressed in the message of the prophets, the psalms and the liturgy, and in the wisdom sayings of the Chosen People.

Scriptural Texts on Creation: Genesis 1-3 occupies a unique place. From a literary standpoint these texts may have had diverse sources.

- Origin & end in God
- Order & goodness
- Vocation of man
- Drama of sin & hope of salvation

Read in the light of Christ, within the unity of Sacred Scripture & in the living Tradition of the Church, these texts are the principal source for catechesis on the mysteries of the beginning: creation, fall, & promise of salvation.



Creation is the Common Work of the Trinity.

1. The eternal God gave a beginning to all that exists outside of himself
2. God alone creates. The Hebrew word verb for *create* (*bara*) is only used for God.
3. Everything that exists depends on God who gives it being.

"In the beginning was the Word. . . and the Word was God. . . all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made."

God created everything by the eternal Word, his beloved Son. In him "all things were created, in heaven and on earth.. . all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

The Church's faith confesses the creative action of the Holy Spirit, the "giver of life", "the Creator Spirit" (*Veni, Creator Spiritus*), the "source of every good".

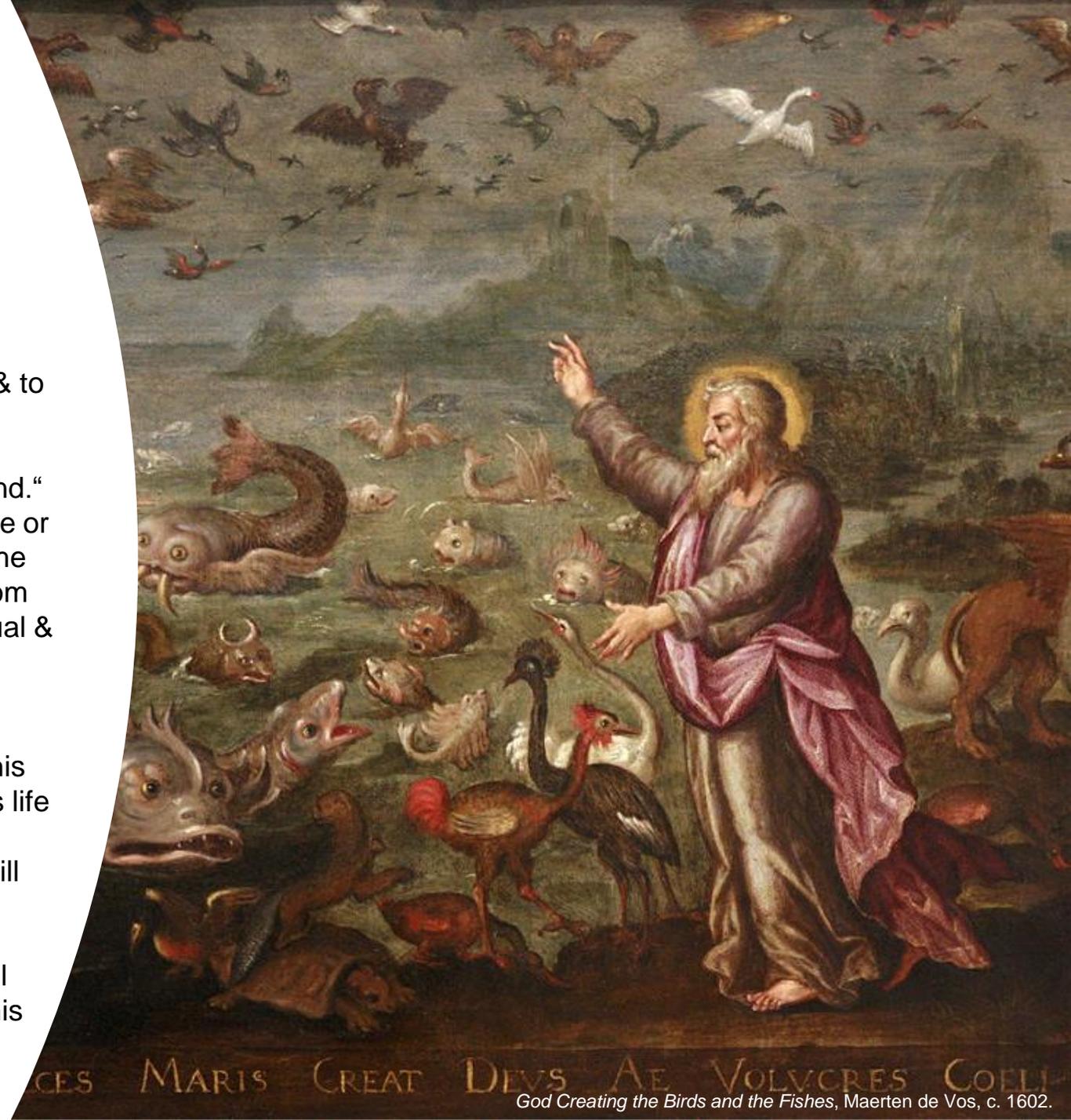
"There exists but one God. . . he is the Father, God, the Creator, the author, the giver of order. He made all things by himself, that is, by his Word and by his Wisdom", "by the Son and the Spirit" who, so to speak, are "his hands".



The Creation of Heaven, Earth and Water, Willem von Herp, 17th c.

The World was Created for the Glory of God

- God created all things "not to increase his glory, but to show it forth & to communicate it" (St Bonaventure).
- God has no other reason for creating than his love & goodness: "Creatures came into existence when the key of love opened his hand." God, of his own goodness & power, not to increase his own beatitude or attain his perfection, but in order to manifest his perfection through the benefits which he bestows on creatures, with absolute freedom & from the beginning of time, made creatures out of nothing, both the spiritual & the corporeal. (Vatican I)
- God's glory consists in the realization of this manifestation & communication of his goodness, for which the world was created
- God made us "to be his sons through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace". "The glory of God is man fully alive; moreover man's life is the vision of God: if God's revelation through creation has already obtained life for all the beings that dwell on earth, how much more will the Word's manifestation of the Father obtain life for those who see God."
- The ultimate purpose of creation is that God "who is the creator of all things may at last become "all in all", thus simultaneously assuring his own glory & our beatitude."



God Creating the Birds and the Fishes, Maerten de Vos, c. 1602.



Some Mysteries of Creation

- 1. God creates freely, by wisdom & love:** God created the world according to his wisdom. It is not the product of any necessity, blind fate or chance. It proceeds from God's free will; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, wisdom & goodness:
- 2. God creates out of nothing:** God needs no pre-existent thing or any help in order to create, nor is creation any sort of necessary emanation from Him. Faith in creation "out of nothing" is a truth full of *promise and hope*. Since God could create out of nothing, he can also give spiritual life to sinners, & bodily life to the dead through the Resurrection. He can also give the light of faith to those who do not yet know him.
- 3. The goodness of creation:** *"And God saw that it was good. . . very good"* *"And God saw that it was good. . . very good"* . God creates through wisdom - his creation is ordered. Because creation comes forth from God's goodness, it shares in that goodness - for God willed creation as a gift addressed to man, an inheritance destined for & entrusted to him. The Church has often had to defend the goodness of creation.
- 4. God transcends creation & is present to it:** *God is "higher than my highest & more inward than my innermost self"*. (St Augustine) God is infinitely greater than all his works. But because he is the free & sovereign Creator, the first cause of all that exists, God is present to his creatures' inmost being: *"In him we live and move and have our being."*
- 5. God upholds & sustains creation.** God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He gives them being & existence, & at every moment, upholds & sustains them. Recognizing this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom & freedom, joy & confidence.
- 6. The first step in salvation history:** towards the Covenant of God with his people. God's saving action in history reaches its fullness in Christ & will reach its final perfection at the end of time, with the new creation.



Divine Providence: God Carries Out His Plan

Divine Providence: the dispositions by which God guides his creation towards its perfection

Creation has its own goodness, but it did not spring complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created "in a state of journeying" toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it.

By his providence God protects & governs all things which he has made.

Sacred Scripture:

- *the solicitude of divine providence is concrete & immediate.* God cares for all, from the least things to the great events of the world & its history. Scripture affirms God's absolute sovereignty over the course of events: "Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases".
- attributes actions to God without mentioning any secondary causes. This is not a mode of speech, but a profound way of recalling *God's primacy & absolute Lordship over history & the world, & so of educating his people to trust in him.* The prayer of the Psalms is the great school of this trust.

Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father who takes care of his children's smallest needs:

"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?'. . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom & his righteousness, & all these things shall be yours as well."

Providence and Evil

If God cares for all his creatures, why does evil exist?

To this question, pressing, unavoidable, painful & mysterious, no quick answer will suffice. Only Christian faith constitutes the answer to this question. There is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of evil.

- the goodness of creation
- the drama of sin
- the patient love of God who comes to meet man by his covenants
- the redemptive Incarnation of his Son
- his gift of the Spirit
- his gathering of the Church
- the power of the sacraments
- His call to a blessed life to which free creatures are invited to consent in advance, but from which, by a terrible mystery, they can also turn away in advance.

The best answer to the problem of evil is not one so much found on paper but on wood.

— Peter Kreeft —



Why didn't God create a world without evil?

Physical Evil

God could always create something better. But with infinite wisdom & goodness God freely willed to create a world *in a state of journeying* towards its ultimate perfection. In God's plan this process of becoming involves the appearance of certain beings & the disappearance of others, the existence of the more perfect alongside the less perfect, both constructive & destructive forces of nature.

With physical good there exists also *physical evil* as long as creation has not reached perfection.



Why Didn't God Create a World Without Evil?

Moral Evil

Angels and men, as intelligent & free creatures, journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice & preferential love. They can therefore go astray. Indeed, they have sinned. Thus has *moral evil*, incommensurably more harmful than physical evil, entered the world.

God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil. He permits it, however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures &, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it: For almighty God. . ., because he is supremely good, would never allow any evil whatsoever to exist in his works if he were not so all-powerful & good as to cause good to emerge from evil itself.

Providence & Evil

God can bring a good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures:

From the greatest moral evil ever committed, the rejection & murder of God's only Son, caused by the sins of all men, God brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of Christ & our redemption.

But for all that, evil never becomes a good.

We know that in everything God works for good for those who love him.” (Rom 8:28)

"It was not you", said Joseph to his brothers, "who sent me here, but God. . . You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive."





St. Catherine of Siena

“Everything comes from love, all is ordained for the salvation of man, God does nothing without this goal in mind.”



Creation of the Sun, Moon and Stars, Jan Brueghel the Younger, 1650..

CREATOR OF HEAVEN & EARTH

Apostles' Creed: God is *creator of heaven & earth*.

Nicene Creed adds *all that is, seen and unseen*.

Heaven & earth: all that exists, creation in its entirety.

This indicates the bond, deep in creation, that unites heaven & earth & distinguishes them.

Earth:

- The world of men

Heaven/the heavens:

- The firmament
- God's 'place' & the heaven that is eschatological glory.
- The saints & the 'place' of the angels who surround God.

God "from the beginning of time made at once, out of nothing, both orders of creatures, the spiritual & the corporeal, that is, the angelic & the earthly, & then *the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit & body.*"



Tobias and the Three Archangels, Francesco Botticini, c. 1480.

The Angels: servants & messengers of God.

The existence of spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture calls angels is a truth of faith.

The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition.

Who are they?

'Angel is the name of their office, not of their nature. Because they "always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" they are the "mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word".

Angels are purely spiritual creatures, with intelligence & will: they are personal & immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures.

The Angels

- Belong to Christ because they were created *through & for* him. They are *messengers of his saving plan*.
- Present since creation & throughout the history of salvation, announcing salvation & serving the accomplishment of the divine plan:
- they closed the earthly paradise, protected Lot , saved Hagar & Ishmael, stayed Abraham's hand, communicated the law, led the People of God, announced births & callings, assisted the prophets
- Gabriel announced the birth of John the Baptist & of Jesus.
- The life of Christ is surrounded by the adoration & service of angels: the nativity, protecting Jesus in his infancy, serving him in the desert, strengthening him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been.
- The angels proclaim the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection.
- They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at the Last Judgement.



The Annunciation, Fra Angelico, 1434.

The angels in the life of the Church



- The whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious & powerful help of angels.
- In the liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore God, & we celebrate feastdays in their honour.
- She invokes their assistance (in the funeral liturgy's *In Paradisum deducant te angeli*. . .["May the angels lead you into Paradise. . ."]).
- From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession.

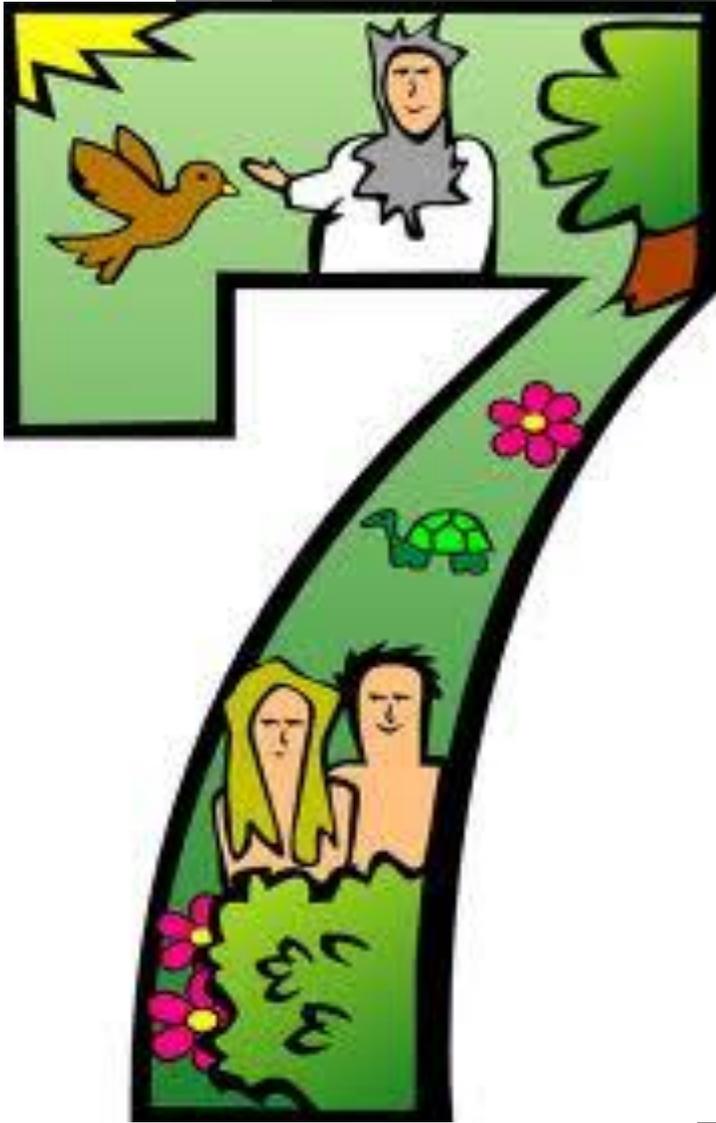
Beside each believer stands an angel as protector & shepherd leading him to life. (CCC, 336)

- Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels & men united in God.

The Visible World

Scripture presents the work of the Creator symbolically as a succession of six days of divine "work", concluded by the "rest" of the seventh day.

The world began when God's word drew it out of nothingness; all existent beings, all of nature, and all human history are rooted in this primordial event, the very genesis by which the world was constituted & time begun.



The Goodness of the World

For each of the works of the six days it is said:

"And God saw that it was good."

Material being is endowed with its own stability, truth & excellence, its own order & laws. Each of the various creatures reflects in its own way God's infinite wisdom & goodness.

We must respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator & would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment.

Catholic Social Teaching: Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*, 24.5.2015.

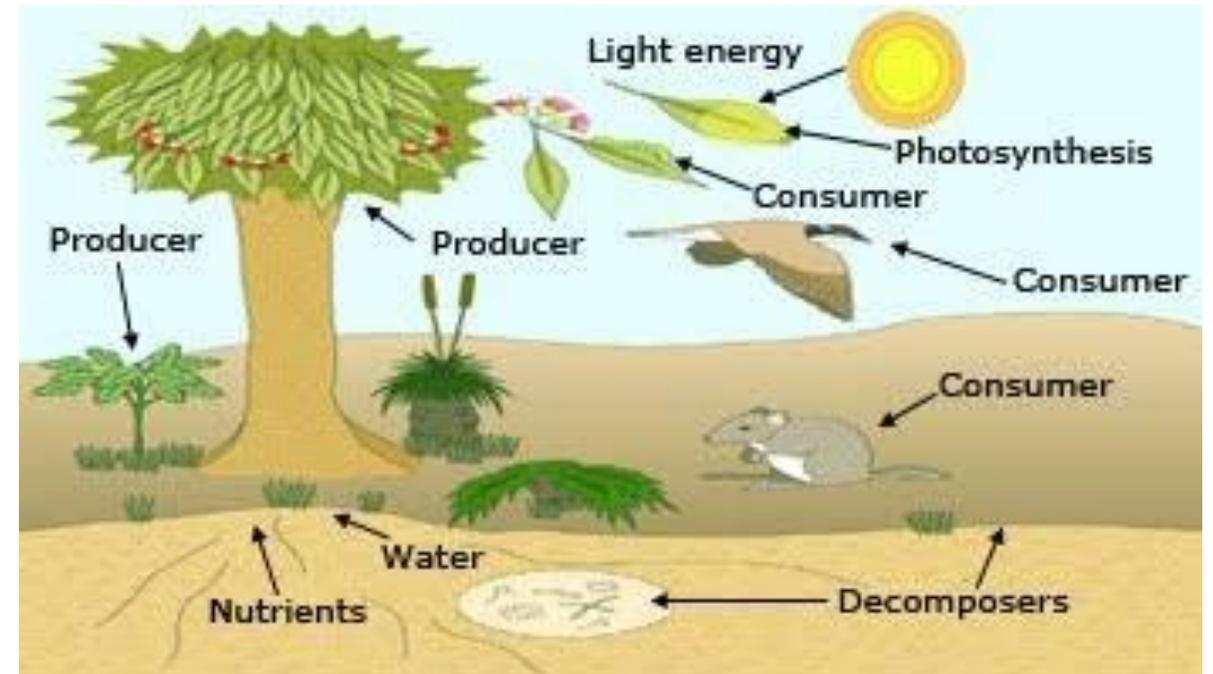


The beauty, diversity & interdependence of creatures

The order & harmony of the created world result from the diversity of beings & from the relationships which exist among them. Man discovers them progressively as the laws of nature. They call forth the admiration of scholars.

The beauty of creation reflects the infinite beauty of the Creator.

No creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other.





The Visible World

The *hierarchy of creatures* is expressed by the order of the "six days", from the less perfect to the more perfect. God loves all his creatures and takes care of each one, even the sparrow.

Nevertheless, Jesus said:

"You are of more value than many sparrows", or again: "Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!"

Man is the summit of the Creator's work, as Sacred Scripture expresses by distinguishing the creation of man from that of the other creatures.

There is a *solidarity among all creatures* arising from the fact that all have the same Creator and are all ordered to his glory:

WORSHIP

The 7th Day: The Sabbath

- “On the seventh day, the “heavens & the earth were finished”, & God “rested” on this day & blessed it.
- Creation was fashioned with a view to the sabbath & therefore for the worship & adoration of God. Worship is inscribed in the order of creation. As the rule of St. Benedict says, nothing should take precedence over “the work of God”, that is, solemn worship. This indicates the right order of human concerns.
- The *eighth day*. The day of Christ's Resurrection. The seventh day completes the first creation, the eighth day begins the new creation. The work of creation culminates in the greater work of redemption. The first creation finds its meaning & summit in the new creation in Christ, the splendor of which surpasses that of the first creation.

Man



God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male & female he created them.

Man occupies a unique place in creation.

1. He is "in the image of God"
2. In his nature he unites the spiritual and material worlds
3. He is created "male and female"
4. God established him in his friendship

Man: In the Image of God

Of all visible creatures only man is able to know & love his creator. He is the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake. He alone is called to share, by knowledge & love, in God's own life.

It was for this end that he was created. This is the fundamental reason for our dignity.

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone, capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession & of freely giving himself & entering into communion with other persons. He is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith & love that no other creature can give.

God created everything for man, but man in turn was created to serve & love God and to offer all creation back to him.



The mystery of man becomes clear in the mystery of the Word made flesh

St. Paul tells us that the human race takes its origin from two men: Adam and Christ. The Church Fathers speak of Christ as the 'new Adam'.

Because of its common origin *the human race forms a unity*, for "from one ancestor [God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth"

"This law of human solidarity and charity assures us that all men are truly brethren.



The Temptation of Adam and Eve (detail), Michelangelo, 1510.

body & soul

The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal & spiritual. The Bible expresses this in symbolic language when it affirms *"then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."*

The Soul

In Sacred Scripture the term "soul" often refers to human *life* or the entire human *person*. It also refers to the innermost aspect of man, that which is of greatest value in him, that by which he is most especially in God's image: "soul" signifies the *spiritual principle* in man.

The Human Body

The human body shares in the dignity of "the image of God": It is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul. The *whole human person* is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit:

Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. He is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day.

Body & Soul but Truly One

The unity of soul & body is so profound that the soul is the "form" of the body. It is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body. Spirit & matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.

Every spiritual soul is created immediately by God. It is not "produced" by the parents. It is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, & will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection.

The term "spirit" signifies that man has a supernatural end. It is not a separate principle.

The spiritual tradition of the Church also emphasizes the *heart*, in the biblical sense of the depths of one's being, where the person decides for or against God.

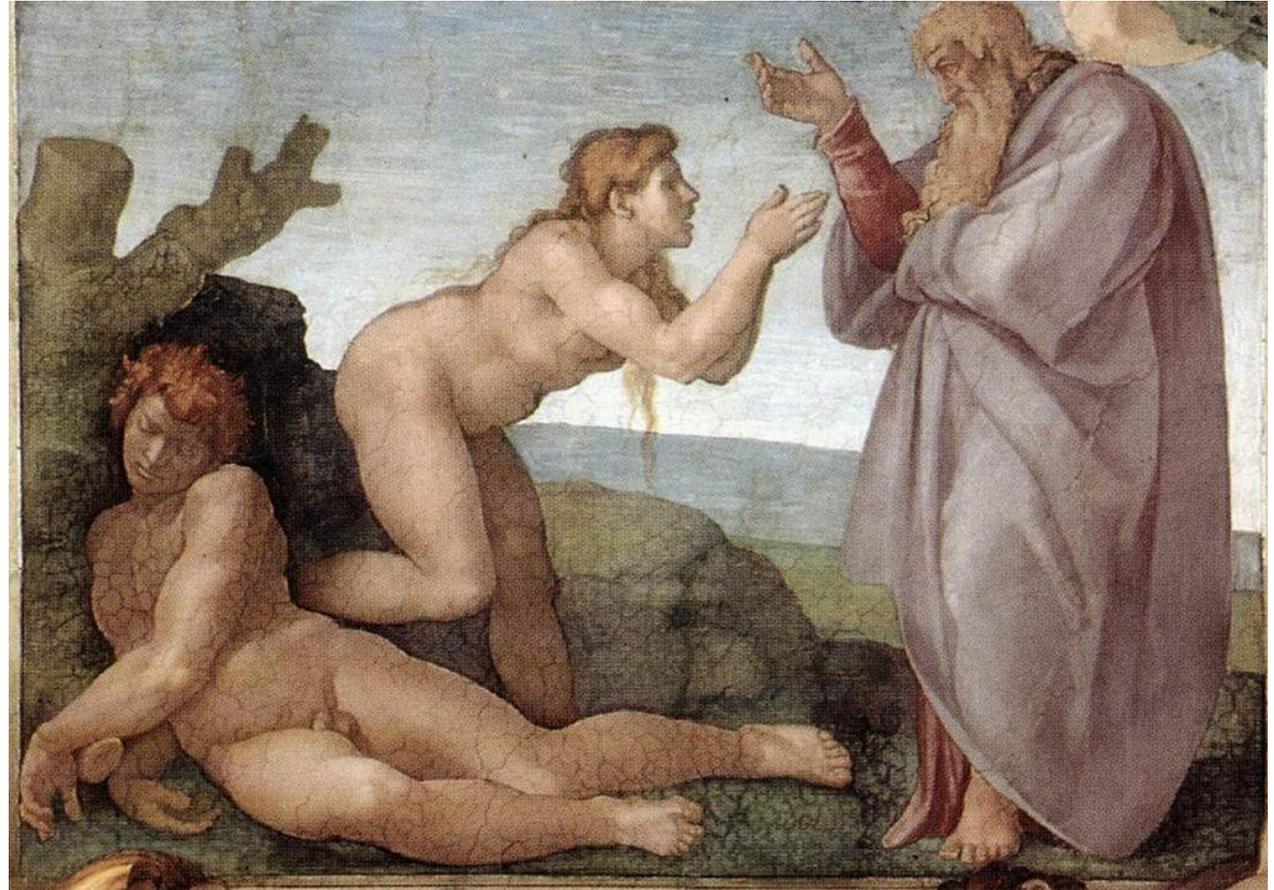


'Male & Female He Created Them'

Equality and difference

Man & woman have been *created, willed* by God

- in perfect equality as human persons
- in their respective beings as man & woman.
- "Being man" or "being woman" is a reality which is good & willed by God: man & woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator. Man & woman both have the same dignity "in the image of God". In their "being-man" & "being-woman", they reflect the Creator's wisdom & goodness.
- God is pure spirit, not man or woman. But the respective "perfections" of man & woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God: those of a mother & those of a father & husband.



The Creation of Eve, Michelangelo, 1509.

Male & Female He Created Them

"Each for the other" - "A unity in two"

- God created man & woman together & willed each for the other. "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him." None of the animals can be man's partner. The woman God "fashions" from the man's rib & brings to him elicits the man's cry of wonder, an exclamation of love & communion: "This at last is bone of my bones & flesh of my flesh." Man discovers woman as another "I", sharing the same humanity.
- Man & woman were made "for each other" - not that God left them half-made & incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be "helpmate" to the other, for they are equal as persons ("bone of my bones") & complementary as masculine & feminine. In marriage God unites them in such a way that, by forming "one flesh", they can transmit human life: "Be fruitful & multiply, & fill the earth." By transmitting human life to their descendants, man & woman as spouses & parents cooperate in a unique way in the Creator's work.
- In God's plan man & woman have the vocation of "subduing" the earth as stewards of God. This sovereignty is not to be an arbitrary & destructive domination. God calls man & woman, made in the image of the Creator "who loves everything that exists", to share in his providence toward other creatures; hence their responsibility for the world God has entrusted to them.



The Creation of Adam and Eve, Giulio Carpioni, 17th c.

Man In Paradise



- The first man was not only created good, but was also established in friendship with his Creator & in harmony with himself & with the creation around him.
- The Church, interpreting the symbolism of biblical language in the light of the New Testament & Tradition, teaches that Adam & Eve were in an
- Original "state of holiness" (grace to share in the divine life).
- State of original justice (as long as they remained in the divine intimacy, they would not suffer or die; inner harmony, the harmony between man & woman, & the harmony between them & all creation).
- The "mastery" over the world that God offered Adam & Eve from the beginning was realized above all *self-mastery*. They were unimpaired & free from the triple concupiscence that subjugates us to disordered pleasures of the senses, covetousness for earthly goods, & self-assertion.
- The sign of their familiarity with God is that God places them in the garden, "to till it & keep it". Work is not yet a burden, but rather the collaboration of man & woman with God in perfecting the visible creation.
- This entire harmony of original justice, foreseen for man in God's plan, will be lost by the sin of our first parents.



Paradise, Jan Brueghel the Elder, 1620.

SOME PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE TRUTH ABOUT CREATION

- Our knowledge and wonder at God's power, wisdom and love lead us to an attitude of reverence, adoration and humility, and to live in God's presence, knowing that we are each a child of God. Faith in providence leads Christians to an attitude of filial trust in God in all circumstances: with gratitude for the benefits we have received, and with simplicity and abandonment to God in circumstances that may appear bad, since God brings greater good out of evil.
- Aware that everything has been created for the glory of God, Christians try in all our actions to seek the true end that fills our lives with happiness: the glory of God, and not our own vainglory.
- God has chosen to place human beings at the forefront of his creation, conferring on them dominion over the world, so that we may perfect it with our work. Human activity, therefore, can be considered as a participation in God's work of creation.
- The greatness and beauty of creatures stirs up in us a sense of wonder and awakens questions about the origin and destiny of the world and of mankind, helping us glimpse the reality of our Creator. Christians' dialogue with non-believers can evoke such questions, helping people to open their minds and hearts to the light of the Creator. Moreover, in conversations with believers of other faiths, an excellent starting-point is the truth of creation, since it is a truth that can be partly shared and underlies some fundamental moral values regarding the dignity of the human person.