



Bridgeman
IMAGES HISTORY

| *Chaos (The Creation)*, 1841 (oil on canvas),
Aivazovsky, Ivan Konstantinovich (1817-1900) /
Museo Armeno, Venice, Italy / Bridgeman Images



SESSION 1

LET THERE BE LIGHT

*In the beginning God created heaven, and earth. And the earth
was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep;
and the spirit of God moved over the waters.*

GENESIS 1:1-2

SESSION READING

GENESIS 1:1-31

Introduction

In the beginning, there was an Artist; in fact, the Artist was there *before* the beginning and is the source of “the beginning.” Time, space, and matter were conceived in the mind of the Artist and brought into being by his Word (2 Maccabees 7:28), and for his good pleasure. Unlike artists that exist within creation, this Artist had no materials from which to create; he created from nothing everything that exists outside of himself, and he did so in order to express the superabundance of his love, because he *himself* is love. Therefore, the Artist endowed his work with expressions of this love by creating a perfect harmony of beauty and truth so that all who perceive his work will know something of himself—the fullness of Love—who is both beautiful and true.

Finally, just as a painter is not *himself* a part of his painting, the Creator of all things exists outside of his creation. Thus, he is able to gaze upon his work with satisfaction and declare, “It is good.”

Prayer to Prepare for Study

Lord, my God, bestow upon me an understanding that knows You, diligence in seeking You, wisdom in finding You, a way of life that is pleasing to You, perseverance that waits trustfully for You, and confidence that I shall embrace You at the last. Amen.

—Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas before study

Points to Ponder

These notes provide insights to help you understand and reflect upon the biblical text.

✦ THE ARTIST AND HIS MOTIVATION

Everything that exists was created by God, the Artist, who is also a poet. In Romans 1:20, we are told that we can know much about the Artist simply by observing his physical creation: the “things that have been made.” These five English words are the translation of the one Greek word, *poiema*. In Ephesians, St. Paul describes the second creation, that of the Church, and says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.” In this passage, the word “workmanship” is also translated from the Greek word *poiema*. So through both the physical world and through the Church on earth, *the* Artist-Poet reveals himself to man. Interestingly, it is from this Greek word, *poiema*, that we derive our English word, *poem*; and that is probably why earthly poets, in imitation of the First Poet, express themselves through their poetry.

God did not create a universe and the creatures in it because he was lonely and needed someone to love. The Creator is, from all eternity, a communion of persons. He is the Most Holy Trinity—one God, three Persons. God is *Elohim*, which is not a name but the general



Hebrew word for *deity*, and it is grammatically plural. Before the beginning of time, the three Persons of the Trinity were already eternally loving each other as a family unit: Father, Son and Holy Spirit-unity in trinity, trinity in unity, existing together as one God, eternally. The love of the Trinity is so immense that God created the universe and mankind to express and share his love beyond himself, ultimately through his Word made flesh in the person of Jesus. For “the Redeemer of Man, Jesus Christ, is the centre of the universe and of history” (*Redemptor Hominis*, no. 1).

God’s name is *YHWY*, “I Am Who I Am” (Ex 3:13-15). It is impossible for our finite human minds to comprehend the infinite mystery of a being who is eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, everywhere and always present, and completely self-sufficient. It is with faith and grace that we accept this mystery because he tells us it is so. Genesis is not about God’s origins because he has none; he has no beginning and no end; he is the *Alpha* and the *Omega* (Rev 22:13).

✦ CREATIVE COOPERATION

We know that Genesis means *beginning*, but the beginning of what? We can simply look to the text itself and see that Genesis refers to the beginning of *all* things: the universe, the earth, plants, beasts and mankind anything and everything outside of God himself. St. John tells us in his Gospel that it was through the Word of God that all things came into being:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. (John 1:1-3)

The Word the Father spoke was, is, and will be the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John 1:14)

In the beginning, God’s canvas was formless and void, with no light and no life. Darkness covered the surface of the deep, but a creative wind was blowing. This wind was not an impersonal force, a mere movement of air molecules. The Hebrew word for *wind* is *ruach*; the same word is used for *spirit* or *breath*. With this understanding of *wind*, we see that it was the Third Person of the Trinity-the Spirit of God-that moved over the face of the waters. Thus, the first movement in creation was by means of water and Spirit. This cooperative action is seen again in God’s second creation, that of the Church: we are born again into Christ by water and Spirit (John 3:3-5), as demonstrated by Jesus himself at his baptism (Matthew 3:16).

Once called into being, the newly created matter lacked order and needed to be differentiated into specific categories and life forms. So God set about the task of shaping and forming the raw materials he had just called into being. He would bring order out of chaos, cooperating in unity with the Son and the Spirit as one creative God.



✦ CREATION *EX NIHILO*

It cannot be emphasized enough that God created the world “out of nothing,” *ex nihilo*. In fact, the sacred writers of Scripture are careful to distinguish the words used for the action of creation. The Hebrew word *bara'*, means to “create a new thing”: It is used in Sacred Scripture only when referring to God’s action of creating something out of nothing by divine fiat, by his divine Word. *Bara'* differs in meaning from another Hebrew word, *yasar*, which means primarily “to fashion” an object already in existence. The words are used within the text to make the powerful theological distinction between creation *ex nihilo* and creation *creatio ex materia* (something from something). By choosing the word *bara'*, the sacred author wants to express the utter newness of creation, that it has been brought into existence by the originaive power of God without recourse to any pre-existing matter. At one moment, there is nothing; in the next moment, there is something. Psalm 33 poetically affirms this: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made [*bara'*], and all their host by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth” (Psalms 33:1, 9).

✦ ORDER BEGETS BEAUTY

Once God created his raw materials *ex nihilo*, he then had unformed matter, void, darkness, and deep waters from which to work. The images of these elements in the first chapter of Genesis represent chaos that will be *formed* into right order by God. Like a painter commencing his work with raw materials, God now begins the process of creating his masterpiece with the raw materials he has just created *ex nihilo*.

There is a pattern or rhythm to God’s creation process that is presented within the framework of six days: two days then one, two days then one. On days one and two, God performs one act; on day three, he acts twice. On days four and five, God performs one act; on day six, he acts twice. Days three and six parallel one another with two acts of creation on each, but also because the second act on each day involves the creation of life. On day three, his second act brings forth life from the ground—vegetation; on day six his second act brings life from the ground—Man.

✦ DAY ONE

We read in Genesis 1:3-5 that on day one, God created light. Since we do not see the creation of the sun and the moon until the fourth day, the source of this light has become a cause for much discussion. The ancients did not have our modern scientific view of the cosmos and the action of the sun and the earth. They did not believe that all light came from the sun. Because the sky was illuminated even on cloudy days, and before or after the sun rose and set, many rabbis considered this initial light to be the splendor of the Divine Presence. One commentary explains it this way:

The first thing created by the divine Word was “light,” the elementary light, or light-material, in distinction from the “lights,” or light-bearers, bodies of light, as the sun, moon, and stars, created on the fourth day, are called. It is now a



generally accepted truth of natural science, that the light does not spring from the sun and stars, but that the sun itself is a dark body, and the light proceeds from an atmosphere which surrounds it. Light was the first thing called forth, and separated from the dark chaos by the creative mandate.

Commentary on the Old Testament
Peabody, MA: Hendrickson. 2002

We are told that there was evening and morning the first day. This always prompts the question about whether or not creation was accomplished over six literal days. While we do not have room here to discuss all the arguments for and against, we should recall from the introduction that Genesis was written not for the purpose of conveying scientific truth, but to convey theological truth. We also need to recognize: a) that the stories in Genesis that were intended to convey profound and invisible realities, do so in such a way as to make them comprehensible to man; and b) the original audience of Genesis was a pre-scientific world.

While the actual scientific process of creation would surely make for the ultimate science adventure, the Holy Spirit, the primary author of Scripture, does not speak of atoms made of neutrons, protons and electrons rotating millions of miles an hour and held in place by gravity and centrifugal force. He does not speak of atomic particles, radioactive materials, black holes, or the formation of galaxies. Even if the minute details of the chemical, mathematical, biological, and atomic processes that he initiated at the dawn of all things *were* revealed, there is no doubt that even the most brilliant of today's scientist would be left in the dark (pun intended).

We must always remember the purpose of the "story" of Genesis—that it was inspired and recorded so that Man might know the *who* and the *why* of creation, not that Man might know the science of the *what* and the *how* of creation. So, we are missing the point if we seek only to prove or disprove that creation was accomplished in six literal days. God blessed us with our reason and our senses to explore the scientific truths of his creation on our own, which, by the way, will ultimately lead to him anyway when rightly pursued because science has its origin in God who is Truth.

God affirms that the result of this first day of creation is good. He will repeat this appraisal after each day until he makes man, whom he declares to be "very good:"

✦ DAY TWO

On day one, God differentiated the light from the darkness, day from night. On day two, he further differentiated his creation by separating two great bodies of water—the water covering the earth and the water above the earth. What we know now as the atmosphere was then called the *firmament*, and with it God divided the waters. It was the waters above the firmament that would one day rain down on the earth during the flood in the days of Noah (Genesis 7:11-12, Psalms 78:23, 2 Kings 7:2,19). Some translations use the word *expanse*. The Hebrew word for firmament is derived from a word meaning to *stamp* or *spread*. Used in Exodus 39:3, its meaning is to hammer a piece of metal and flatten it out in order to cover an extended area.



✦ DAY THREE

Differentiation continues on day three. The surface of the earth is still covered with huge waves breaking over the deep waters, and at this point there is no land, only water-water everywhere. Addressing the water on the earth (not above the firmament), God commands that the water be gathered into one place, allowing land to appear. He called the land, *earth*, and the waters, he called the *seas*. Once again, God saw that it was good.

There is no new creation here in God's first action on day three; there is only the organization and shaping of existing material. One can imagine the continents and islands forming and rising out of the ocean with the waters receding into the seas. In the time of Noah, we will see these sea-gathering boundaries breached, and chaos will return to the earth for a short time.

Recall the creative rhythm mentioned earlier—two days then one day, two days then one day. Day one and day two both consisted of a single action, but here on the third day, God doesn't stop after just one act. His organizational act of dividing land from water prepares the way for another, *creative*, action. In this second action on day three, God commands the newly formed land to produce vegetation, giving it generative powers. He creates living plants that produce seeds for their own propagation, each producing according to its own species: apple seeds producing apple trees; peach seeds producing peach trees.

It is plain to see how this second action is something more than just distinguishing one element from another. In this action, God calls forth life from the earth. Of course, plant life is not the same as animal or human life that breathes, and the powerful Hebrew term, *bara'*, is not employed, but it is life nonetheless. And for the second time on day three, "it was so;" and "God saw that it was good."

In pagan religions, it is believed that gods inhabit the earth and that they are the potent forces that make trees grow, springs gurgle, and rains fall. But when God reveals that he imbues the earth with the ability to generate living plants, he essentially pulls back the curtain on the pagan gods, illustrating that it is he, not some mythical being, who animates nature. And, unlike pagan gods believed to exist within nature, the God of Genesis exists apart from his creation. Vegetation, like the rest of creation, serves and obeys God's commands, and follows the laws of nature that he embedded into the fabric of creation. No pagan gods need apply; they are unnecessary. Nature is not itself a god, nor do gods animate it. In fact, nature itself is *devoid* of a spiritual nature. In other words, nature is nature, and God is God. Nature is a creation of the one God. God is outside nature, and it is he who created, controls, and sustains his creation.

✦ DAY FOUR

We are surprised that God would wait till the fourth day to create the sun, moon and stars, after creating on the third day the vegetation that needs sunlight to survive. But elemental light was created on day one, and it is now concentrated in the heavenly bodies: the sun, moon, and stars. Thus the great lights now mark days, months, and years. God made the lights and set them in the firmament of the heavens. "It was so," and "God saw that it was good."



In ancient cultures, the celestial luminaries were considered deities. In order to minimize their importance, the sun and moon are not named as such in the creation story of Genesis. They are only described; to name them would be to recall contemporary pagan deities, such as the Egyptian sun god, Ra. The sacred writer, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, puts them in their proper cosmological place; they are not gods but creations of the one true God, and like the vegetation, they serve their Creator by differentiating day and night, seasons, days, and years. The stars, likewise, are in the sky, but are not given any particular importance.

✦ DAY FIVE

At the dawn of day five, we have land separated from water, sunlight shining on the earth, living plants producing vegetation, and an atmosphere above the earth; it would seem suitable now for animal life. Following the rhythm of creation and corresponding with day two, we can expect one creative act on day five, the second day in the second cycle of three days. Up until now God has been shaping and making, but we haven't seen the type of creation described as *bara'* since Genesis 1:1, when God created the heavens and the earth. Now we again see the Hebrew word *bara'*; God creates animal life, bringing forth two kinds of animals—animals that swim and animals that fly.

At God's command, the seas bring forth swarms of living water creatures, including great sea monsters. No doubt these included plankton and whales, shrimp and lobsters, fish and sea turtles. If you have ever watched *National Geographic* or other nature documentaries, you would agree that it is difficult not to be amazed at the staggering variety of creatures living in the seas. The brilliant colors, bizarre shapes, and odd characteristics never cease to amaze. One suspects that it was with much glee and pleasure that God created such a great variety of gorgeous and amazing sea creatures. The waters certainly did "bring forth the swarms of living creatures."

Pagan cultures worshipped the "sea monsters" as deities that symbolized the cause of chaos. By mentioning the "sea monsters" as a direct creation of God at this time in the creation process, the mythical divinity attributed to them by the pagans is stripped away. These "sea monsters" could have been the great, impressive looking creatures of the oceans, including very large fish and giant marine mammals, such as whales.

God also created (*bara'*), the winged creatures of the air. Many people enjoy the hobby of bird-watching and know the thrill in discovering a bird they have never seen before. How God must have thrilled at creating the birds, with their great beauty and technology of flight.

He commanded these creatures of sea and air to "be fruitful and multiply," to fill the waters and the sky. They have certainly obeyed him; the instinct to reproduce, survive, and fill the earth is built right into their nature. "God saw that it was good." It was now the end of the fifth day.



✦ DAY SIX

Now that the water and sky are filled with self-propagating creatures, God is ready for day six. Corresponding to day three in the first cycle of creation, God will perform two distinct actions on this day: the creation of land animals, and the creation of Man. God makes the animals that will crawl upon the land and he creates Man, who will have dominion over them.

First, God creates the land animals in distinct categories of creatures, according to their kind. These are the mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, spiders and every other creeping, walking, crawling, climbing, hopping and slithering creature. Once again, the great Artist produces a stunning array of creative brilliance and diversity.

With the creation of man, we reach the final act in the drama of creation, the crowning action that is at the heart of Divine Revelation. All that has been created until this point was in preparation for the creation of Man (CCC 258). Mankind is to be unlike anything else in creation, for God wills to make Man in his own image and likeness. Man is to be a creature capable of relating to beings both heavenly (spiritual), and earthly (corporeal). He will have a physical body like the animals, but he will also have a spirit like the angels. Nevertheless, it is the whole man that is made in the image of God, not merely his spirit. Man does not have a body; he is his body. Man does not have a spirit; he is his spirit. “The central dogmas of the Christian faith imply that the body is an intrinsic part of the human person and thus participates in his being created in the image of God” (Ratzinger, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, 2004).

In the ancient world, an image was believed to carry the essence of that which it represented, so that the action of a deity was carried out through its image. Similarly, Man, who was made in the image of God, would be understood to have something of God’s essence in him. God is personal; Man is personal. God is spirit; Man is spirit (as well as corporal). God is love, and Man is created with the ability to love. God can create, exercise his will, communicate, think rationally and abstractly—all attributes personified in Man precisely because Man is made in the image of God. It would further be understood in ancient times that God may choose to delegate certain actions to Man, who is made in his image. As God has dominion over the universe, so man will have dominion over the animals; as God sustains his creation from without, so Man will be charged with tending and keeping parts of it from within. As an image, Man makes manifest a reality that is other than himself, and in that reality Man has meaning and dignity.

The Psalmist meditates on the mystery of Mankind:

When I look at your heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field. (Psalms 8:3-7)



✦ A FORESHADOWING OF THE REVELATION OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Earlier in this lesson we touched upon the nature of the Most Holy Trinity: one God in three Persons. We also learned that the word used for God in the first chapter of Genesis is *Elohim*, which is grammatically a plural noun. With this understanding of God, one may not feel the need to reflect much on God's use of plural pronouns in his action on the sixth day: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." However, its use has actually been the source of much speculation.

It has been suggested that God is employing the "plural of majesty," like a king who, by his own authority, issues a decree in the plural: "We decree . . ." The problem with this theory is that there is no precedent for it in ancient documents or in Scripture. Another explanation suggests that, because Scripture describes God as being surrounded by his celestial court of angels, the angels are included in the "us." But while there is no doubt that a heavenly host surrounds the throne of God, there is nothing in Scripture or Tradition that suggests the angels co-created with God.

A third explanation, not to the exclusion of the others, is that God is referring to himself as a plurality of Persons. But it would be risky to say this instance of plurality refers to the Trinity since the writer undoubtedly knew no such concept. On the other hand, one must realize that the Holy Spirit is the primary author of Scripture and often reveals more through the writer than the writer may completely comprehend himself. It cannot be denied that the plurality of *Elohim* and God's use of "our" and "us," at the very least, allows for the New Testament revelation of the Holy Trinity. We know from the writings of the New Testament that the early Church understood that Christ was active in creation with the Father and the Spirit; perhaps the use of the plural divine pronouns assisted in laying the foundation for the development of the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity.

Most modern scholars look askance at suggestions that the Trinity could be alluded to here, but the Fathers of the Church were not as skeptical. They did not blush to perceive the Trinity revealed in the divine plural. From the days of the early Church, Christians have traditionally seen the Trinity in Genesis 1:26:

For God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"; and a little after, it is said, "So God created man in the image of God." Certainly, in that is of the plural number, the word "our" would not be rightly used if man were made in the image of one person, whether of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Spirit; but because he was made in the image of the Trinity, on that account it is said, "after our image." But again, lest we should think that three Gods were to be believed in the Trinity, whereas the same Trinity is one God, it is said, "So God created man in the image of God," instead of saying, "In His own image."

—St. Augustine, On the Trinity



✦ MAN: MALE AND FEMALE—IN HIS IMAGE

The Hebrew word for man is *'adam*. *Man* is a generic term for *mankind*, encompassing both male and female. It was noted earlier that the image of God bestowed on Man must be understood as being manifest in Man as a whole: a creature that is at once both fully physical and fully spiritual. The importance of rejecting any suggestion of dualism in the nature of Man becomes clearer when one considers the Trinitarian nature of God.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, before becoming Pope Benedict XVI, referred to the human person as a being created in the image of God when he wrote, “the mystery of man cannot be grasped apart from the mystery of God” (*Communion and Stewardship*, 2004). Given the Trinitarian nature of God, a communion of persons Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—it follows that man, as created in God’s image, must also be a relational being. The creation of man as “male and female” demonstrates that man was not created as an isolated being, but as a “person” who is in relation with other persons. Now add to this that man, as an “image” of God, makes visible the invisible. The purpose of an image is to reflect its model. With this in mind, it begins to become clear that the physical nature of man is integral to making the communion of persons, the Trinitarian nature of God, visible in the physical world (see Ratzinger. *Communion and Stewardship*, 2004).

Additionally, by revealing that “God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27), it is revealed that male and female are equal in dignity and complementary to one another in their masculinity and femininity. In being created as male and female, “man and woman constitute two different ways of the human body ‘being a body’” (Pope John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 58).

When God finishes his creative work on day six, he does not see that it is merely good; rather, he sees that it is “very good”! It is now the end of the sixth day.

✦ EVOLUTION?

Ever since Darwin published his *Origin of Species* in 1859, there has been discussion among Christians about how this impacts an understanding of the creation accounts in Genesis. The Catholic Church recognizes no conflict between legitimate science and religion because both seek Truth; God is Truth, and Truth will never contradict Truth. Catholics are therefore allowed to believe that an evolutionary process was used by God, and they are not obliged to believe in a literal six-day creation, made up of twenty-four-hour days. These theories relate to the *process* of creation, not the *origin* of creation. What Catholics must believe is that in the beginning, God created everything *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. Catholics are obliged to believe that God created life, and that man’s spiritual soul was and is created immediately by God. A Catholic cannot hold that it was a matter of chance that brought about a process of evolution, or that matter existed eternally. Additionally, Catholics cannot hold that the soul of man evolved; Catholic teaching informs us that man’s spiritual soul was and is a direct and conscious creation of God. God infused an immortal soul into Man, and as a result, Man is created in the image of God. Whether you consider that Man was



created from dust or by a process of divine evolution—in either case, God infused the soul, reaching down, breathing it in, and thereby conferring incredible dignity to Man.

✦ CONCLUSION

The first command God imposed on Man was that he “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion” over all the creatures God had created. If you ever looked down on the earth from the window of an airplane, you saw evidence that man has done just that. Looking down, you saw the patchwork quilt of fields and farms, bustling cities, and ships upon the sea. But the earth is not ours to abuse, exploit, or raze. We are here on earth as God’s regents, stewards of the good gifts God has granted us.

God does not communicate directly to plants or animals as he does to Man. Because Man is created in God’s image, he can communicate directly with the Almighty. God is transcendent but he is also personal, and he condescends to have communion with Man.



Catechism Connections

These readings from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) will deepen your understanding of this session’s presentations and discussions. The numbers identify the relevant paragraphs in the Catechism.

- ✦ God transcends creation. CCC 290, 300
- ✦ Creation finds its meaning in Christ. CCC 315, 349
- ✦ God creates everything from nothing. CCC 296-298, 338
- ✦ Understand more fully what the soul is. CCC 33, 363-366
- ✦ All of creation is a work of the Holy Trinity. CCC 258, 292, 316.
- ✦ Read more about man as the crowning glory of God’s creation. CCC 2566
- ✦ God upholds and sustains creation from moment to moment; creation is dependent upon him.



Rome to Home

During his weekly general audience on January 2, 1980, as part of his catechesis on the human body, Pope John Paul II talked about “Creation as a Fundamental and Original Gift”:

In the narrative of the creation of the visible world, the giving has a meaning only with regard to man. In the whole work of creation, it can be said only of him that a gift was conferred on him; the visible world was created “for him.” The biblical account of creation offers us sufficient reasons to understand and interpret in this way. Creation is a gift, because man appears in it. As the “image of God,” man is capable of understanding the meaning of gift in the call from nothingness to existence. He is capable of answering the Creator with the language of this understanding. Interpreting the narrative of creation with this language, it can be deduced from it that creation constitutes the fundamental and original gift. Man appears in creation as the one who received the world as a gift, and it can also be said that the world received man as a gift.

—St. John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 59

Opening Prayer

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer!

—Psalm 19:14



| *The Creation of the Animals* (oil on canvas), Tintoretto, Jacopo Robusti (1518-94) / Galleria dell' Accademia, Venice, Italy / Cameraphoto Arte Venezia / Bridgeman Images



Study Questions

It's best to read the entire Scripture reading/or this lesson and Points to Ponder before responding to the study questions.

1. In Genesis 1:1-3 and Genesis 1:26 we are introduced to the Blessed Trinity. Where in Genesis 1:1-3 do you find the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as professed in the Creed at every Sunday Mass?

2. The Gospel of John was written when some in the early Church were denying the divinity of Christ; much of the Gospel of John addresses and defends Christ's divinity. What similarities do we see in Genesis 1:1-3 and John 1:1-5, and how do both passages point to the divinity of Christ? In what way does Revelation 22:13 further support Christ's divinity?

3. The sacred author of Genesis makes use of solemn language to tell the story of Creation. The Church gives us guidance in understanding this language. What are the senses of Scripture? Explain these four senses. (CCC 115-117)



4. Angels are not specifically mentioned in the creation story; when did God create angels, and what are they? (CCC 327-330)

5. How does the first Creation account serve as a powerful reminder to the people of Israel about the futility of worshipping the various gods of the surrounding nations? (Deut 4:15-19) Which temptations to worship gods other than the one true God are most real for us today?

6. Did God simply take a “hands off” approach to the world after Creation? In what ways is the creative power of God actively working and discernible in the world in all ages at all times? (CCC 301, 302)

7. What is unique about the account of the Creation of Man as compared to the accounts of the previous five days of Creation?



8. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”—this wording in our suggested memory verse (Genesis 1:27), bears close scrutiny. What insight do we gain from the words of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)? [See “Man: Male and Female-In His Image” in the Points to Ponder section]

9. What is required of man in order to properly exercise the dominion that he has been granted over all the earth? (CCC 2415) How does this tie in with Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 22:36-40, and how can this perspective protect us from the extremes of radical environmentalism?



Voice of the Saints

“Listen to the sermon preached to you by the flowers, the trees, the shrubs, the sky, and the whole world. Notice how they preach to you a sermon full of love, of praise of God, and how they invite you to glorify the sublimity of that sovereign Artist who has given them being.”

—St. John of the Cross



Questions for Reflection

The following questions are intended to help you reflect upon ways in which the discoveries you've made in this lesson can be applied to your own life.

1. In Question 5 we touched on the temptations to idolatry that exist in the world today. Prayerfully examine your own priorities and passions. What things in your life compete for the love that is due to God alone? Remember, you're not searching for things that actually receive this love, but rather things that in some way, perhaps even small ways, serve as a distraction from loving God above all else.

2. Reflect on those people who most challenge and aggravate you. How might you go about seeing within them the image of the Creator so as to alleviate any hostility that might exist in your heart toward those persons?

Summary: Lesson 1

In this lesson we learned:

1. The early Church Fathers perceived the Trinity in the first chapter of Genesis.
2. Jesus is not among the created, but is the Creator.
3. While there is a literal sense to all Scripture, not every phrase should be taken literally.
4. God sustains his creation at every moment; he has not left us to our own devices.
5. God has always existed. He is the beginning and the end, the *Alpha* and the *Omega*.
6. God created everything out of nothing, *ex nihilo*.



7. There is a rhythm to God's Creation process.
8. God created animals and Man, and he gave Man dominion over the animals.
9. Catholics may believe in an evolutionary *process* in creation; they are not obliged to believe in a literal six-day Creation.
10. Catholics are obliged to believe that the creation of man's soul was an immediate and direct action of God. Catholic teaching holds that the human soul did not "evolve."

Closing Prayer

Lord, your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

I am your servant; give me discernment so that I may know your decrees.

The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

I long for your salvation, Lord; your teaching is my delight.

—Adapted from Ps 119:105, 125, 130, 174

Notes
