



CREATION

Texts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

CREATION IS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL GOD'S SAVING PLANS

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1)

The profession of faith confesses that God the Father Almighty is ‘Creator of heaven and earth’ (Apostles’ Creed), ‘of all that is seen, and unseen’ (Nicene Creed). (279)

Creation is the beginning of the history of salvation that culminates in Christ

Creation is the foundation of all God’s saving plans, the beginning of the history of salvation that culminates in Christ. Conversely, the mystery of Christ casts conclusive light on the mystery of creation and reveals the end for which ‘in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’: from the beginning God envisaged the glory of the new creation in Christ. (280)

Catechesis on creation is of major importance

Catechesis on creation is of major importance. It concerns the very foundation of human and Christian life: for it makes explicit the response of the Christian faith to the basic question that men of all times have asked 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 two questions, the first about the origin and the second about the end, are inseparable. They are decisive for the meaning and orientation of our life and actions. (282)

The existence of God the Creator can be known with certainty through his works

Human intelligence is surely already capable of finding a response to the question of origins. 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 and disfigured by error. This is why faith comes to confirm and enlighten reason in the correct understanding of this truth: “By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear.” (Heb 11:3) (286)

Creation is revealed as the first step towards the covenant of God with his People

Beyond the natural knowledge that every man can have of the Creator, God progressively revealed to Israel the mystery of creation. Thus the revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation and forging of the covenant of the one God with his People. Creation is revealed as the first step towards this covenant, the first and universal witness to God’s all powerful love. And so, the truth of creation is also expressed with growing vigour in the message of the prophets, the prayer of the psalms and the liturgy, and in the wisdom sayings of the Chosen People. (287, 288)

The first three chapters of Genesis - the principal source for catechesis on creation

Among all the Scriptural texts about creation, *the first three chapters of Genesis* occupy a unique place. The inspired authors have placed them at the beginning of Scripture to express in their solemn language the truths of creation - its origin and its end in God, its order and goodness, the vocation of man, and finally the drama of sin and the hope of salvation. Read in the light of Christ, within the unity of Sacred Scripture and in the living Tradition of the Church, these texts remain the principal source for catechesis on the mysteries of the ‘beginning’: creation, fall, and promise of salvation. (289)

CREATION - WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

God the Father made all things by his Word and by his Spirit

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1): three things are affirmed - the eternal God gave a beginning to all that exists outside of himself; he alone is Creator (‘create’ - Hebrew bara - always has God for its subject); the totality of what exists (‘the heavens and the earth’) depends on the One who gives it being. (290)

“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.” (Jn 1:1-3) The New Testament reveals that 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.” (Col 1:16-17)

The Church’s faith likewise confesses the creative action of the Holy Spirit, the ‘giver of life’, the ‘Creator Spirit’ (*Veni, Creator Spiritus*), the ‘source of every good’. (291)

The Old Testament suggests and the New Covenant reveals the creative action of the Son and the Spirit, inseparably one with that of the Father. “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’.” (St Irenaeus) Creation is the common work of the Holy Trinity. (291)

THE WORLD WAS CREATED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Creation came about when the ‘key of love opened his hand’

God created all things “not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it,” (St Bonaventure) for God has no other reason for creating than his love and goodness: “Creatures came into existence when the key of love opened his hand.” (St Thomas Aquinas) (293)

God creates us ‘to be his sons through Jesus Christ’

The glory of God consists in the realisation of this manifestation and communication of his goodness, for which the world was created. God made us “to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace,” (Eph 1:5-6), for “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 wish to see God.” (St Irenaeus) The ultimate purpose of creation is that God “who is Creator of all things may at last become ‘all in all’, thus simultaneously assuring his own glory and our beatitude.” (Vatican II) (294)

A UNIVERSE OF WISDOM, GOODNESS, AND BEAUTY

God creates according to wisdom - not by necessity or chance

We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom. It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance. We believe that it proceeds from God’s free will; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, wisdom and goodness: “For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created”. (Rev 4:11) Therefore the Psalmist exclaims: “O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you created them all” (Ps 104:24). (295)

God creates ‘out of nothing’: an ordered and good world

We believe that God needs no pre-existent thing or any help in order to create, nor is creation any sort of necessary emanation from the divine substance. God creates 'out of nothing.' (296)

Because God creates through wisdom, his creation is ordered: "You have arranged all things by measure and number and weight." (Wis 11:20) The universe, created in and by the eternal Word, the "image of the invisible God", is destined for and addressed to man, himself created 'in the image of God' and called to a personal relationship with him.

Because creation comes forth from God's goodness, it shares in that goodness - "And God saw that it was good...very good" (Gen 1:4,10,12,18,21,31) - for God willed creation as a gift addressed to man, an inheritance destined for and entrusted to him. (299)

Divine providence in creation

Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created "in a state of journeying" (in *statu viae*) toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it. We call "divine providence" the dispositions by which God guides his creation toward this perfection:

"By his providence God protects and governs all things he has made, 'reaching mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and ordering all things well.' For 'all are open and laid bare to his eyes,' even those things which are yet to come into existence through the free action of creatures.." (Vatican Council I) (302)

Richness, diversity and order in creation

God himself created the visible world in all *its richness, diversity and order*. 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. On the subject of creation, the sacred text teaches the truths revealed by God for our salvation, permitting us to "recognise the inner nature, the value and the ordering of the whole of creation to the praise of God". (Vatican II, The Church) (337)

God is the Creator of all – the goodness and perfection of creatures reflect the Creator

Nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator. 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 and time begun. (338)

Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection. For each one of the works of the "six days" it is said: "And God saw that it was good." "By the very nature of creation, material being is endowed with its own stability, truth, excellence, its own order and laws." (Vatican II, GS). Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment. (339)

The interdependence of creatures and the beauty of the universe

God wills the *interdependence of creatures*. The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other. (340)

The beauty of the universe: The order and harmony of the created world results from the diversity of beings and 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 and ought to inspire the respect and submission of man's intellect and will. (341)

The hierarchy of creatures: man is the summit

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." (Lk 12:6-7; Mt 12:12). (342)

Man is the summit of the Creator's work, as the inspired account expresses, clearly distinguishing the creation of man from that of the other creatures. (343)

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

"May you be praised, O Lord in all your creatures, especially brother sun, by whom you give us light for the day; he is beautiful, radiating great splendour, and offering us a symbol of you, the Most High...May you be praised, my Lord, for sister water, who is very useful and humble, precious and chaste...May you be praised, my Lord, for sister earth, our mother, who bears and feeds us, and produces the variety of fruits and dappled flowers and grasses...Praise and bless my Lord, give thanks and serve him in all humility." (St Francis of Assisi, Canticle of the Creatures) (344)

THE FIRST CREATION LOOKS TO THE NEW CREATION IN CHRIST

Worship is inscribed in the order of creation

Creation was fashioned with a view to the Sabbath and therefore for the worship and 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. (347)

The first creation finds its summit in the new creation in Christ

The eighth day. For us a new day has dawned: the day of Christ's Resurrection. The seventh day completes the first creation. The eighth day begins the new creation. Thus the work of creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new creation in Christ, the splendour of which surpasses that of the first creation. (349)

IN BRIEF

- **God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness and beauty - this is the glory for which God created them. (319)**
- **God willed the diversity of his creatures and their own particular goodness, their interdependence and their order. He destined all material creatures for the good of the human race. Man, and through him all creation, is destined for the glory of God. (353)**
- **In the creation of the world and of man, God gave the first and universal witness to his almighty love and his wisdom, the first proclamation of the 'plan of his loving goodness', which finds its goal in the new creation in Christ. (315)**

