



**GOD'S**  
**GOOD CREATION:**  
**THE BEGINNING OF SALVATION HISTORY**



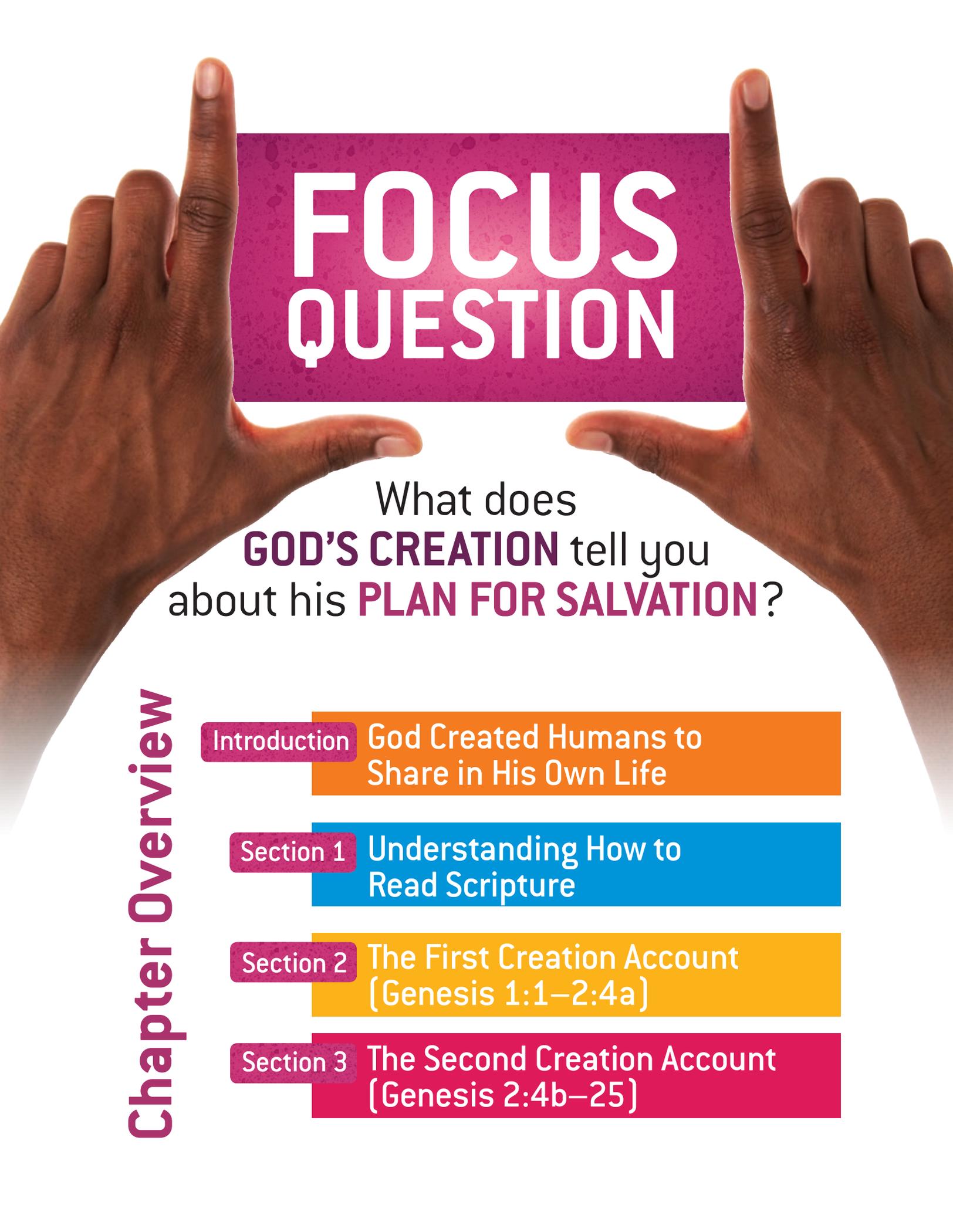
# GOD'S GIFTS: CREATION and the SACRAMENTS

At age fifteen, Annie Powell dreamed of having a summer camp for teens in the Colorado Rockies so that they could enjoy the beauty of her state and encounter God through creation. After she married, Annie and her husband, Scott, founded Camp Wojtyla. They named the camp after St. John Paul II, using his given name, Karol Wojtyla. As a young priest, Karol Wojtyla himself had spent a great deal of time leading teens and young adults to perceive God through hiking and skiing; he had a strong passion for inviting youth to encounter Christ through creation.

Camp Wojtyla now serves middle-school and high-school teens and provides opportunities for encountering God in exploration of the natural world. During each week-long session, participants rock climb, raft, zip line, and hike through the Rockies as well as attend daily Mass and Eucharistic Adoration and have opportunities for Confession. In the evenings, campers reflect on their various outdoor and spiritual experiences, making connections with their day-to-day lives.

The teens emerge with a profound sense of God's love as experienced in creation. "Camp not only gave me a sense of courage and strength in myself, it gave me long-lasting friendships with young Catholics who want the same thing I do: a friendship with Jesus Christ. Every morning, I woke up to God's beautiful creation, and that was enough to remind me how much he truly loves us," one camper said at the end of the experience.

Annie Powell also notices growth in the college students who serve as staff members. They too seem to strip off their false selves and truly come alive during their summer work.



# FOCUS QUESTION

What does  
**GOD'S CREATION** tell you  
about his **PLAN FOR SALVATION**?

## Chapter Overview

Introduction God Created Humans to  
Share in His Own Life

Section 1 Understanding How to  
Read Scripture

Section 2 The First Creation Account  
(Genesis 1:1–2:4a)

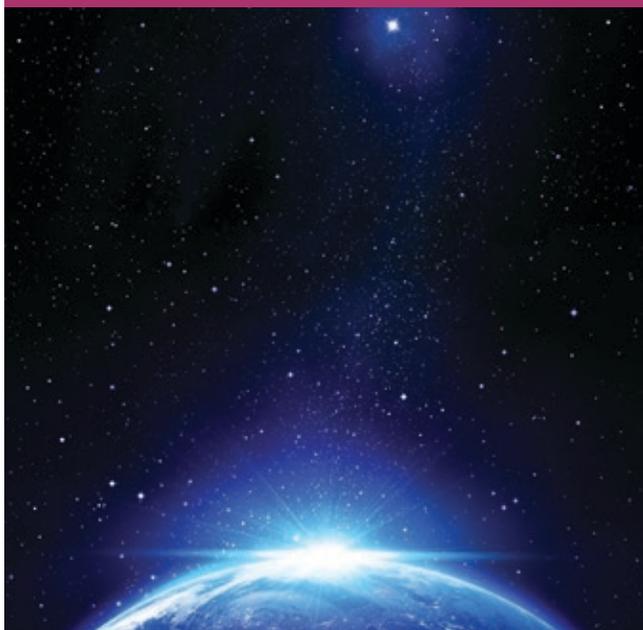
Section 3 The Second Creation Account  
(Genesis 2:4b–25)

## INTRODUCTION

# God Created Humans to Share in His Own Life

### MAIN IDEA

God created humans to share, by knowledge and love, in his own life. His creation reveals the type of relationship that he wanted with humanity. After sin entered the world, the only way this relationship would be possible was through the saving actions of Christ.



Creation reveals God and his mystery. Having a simple, rosy picture of creation, however, is naïve: camping in a tent during a Sierra Nevada blizzard can broaden your perspective! The natural world has many dimensions, so it stands to reason that its Creator does too.

This book will familiarize you with the Paschal Mystery—that is, the Good News that Jesus freely suffered, died, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven to save you from sin and give you the opportunity to be with him eternally in heaven. Like creation and God, the Paschal Mystery also has many dimensions. On one

level, its truth can be summarized in a sentence. On a deeper level, the Paschal Mystery sheds light on all of history, especially the mission of Jesus Christ on earth. The Paschal Mystery explains how you are destined for heaven and teaches you that life is stronger than death. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* highlights the importance of the Paschal Mystery:

The Paschal Mystery of Christ’s cross and Resurrection stands at the center of the Good News that the apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the world. God’s saving plan was accomplished “once for all” by the redemptive Death of his Son Jesus Christ. (CCC, 571)

The story of God’s redeeming activity in human history, which reaches its completion in the Lord’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection, starts at the very beginning of creation, both the creation of spiritual beings known as angels and the creation of the first humans, named in Genesis as Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve’s fall from grace, known as Original Sin (see Chapter 2), ruptured their relationship with God, but God did not abandon them or their descendants to sin. The story of humankind is the story of salvation



## NOTE TAKING

**Synthesizing Information.** Print the following quotation in your notebook. Write your own sentence explaining its meaning. As you read this section, list relevant points pertaining to God’s creation that support and enrich St. Bonaventure’s words.

**God created all things “not to increase his glory, but to show forth and communicate it” (St. Bonaventure, quoted in CCC, 293).**

history, a history that reaches its climax in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

## Why Did God Create?

Creation is the common work of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. St. Bonaventure, who lived in the thirteenth century, once said that God can freely create the world out of his love only because he is a Trinity. What he meant by this is that humans can only understand how God can freely create the world from nothing when they see God as an eternal communion of love. The Father, for all eternity, loves his Son and gives life to his Son. The Son, in receiving the Father's love, returns his love to his Father. From their mutual love, the Holy Spirit comes forth as the bond of love between the Father and the Son.

It is within this intimate and eternal exchange of love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that creation takes place. The Father creates the world and gives his love to it in a similar way that he has always loved his beloved Son. The Son, receiving the Father's love and expressing his love in return, impresses the image of the Father's love on all of creation. The New Testament teaches that the Father created everything by the eternal Word, his beloved Son. In Jesus "were created all things 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; cf. Jn 1:1–3). Likewise, the Holy Spirit, who is the bond of love between the Father and the Son, breathes life into creation (see Gn 2:7). The Church confesses the Holy Spirit as the "giver of life" in the Nicene Creed. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit worked together as one to create the world.

Understanding the world as created by the Blessed Trinity explains something about *why* God created the world. God did not need to create the world, nor does God need anything from the world; that would imply that God was imperfect and needed

to become better or more perfect. Rather, the Blessed Trinity is a perfect communion of love, overflowing with goodness and perfection. God created the world freely to manifest his glory and share it with humans. God wants you to share in his truth, goodness, and beauty—and above all, in his love. God the Father created the world so that humans could become sons and daughters through Jesus Christ (see CCC, 294) and share in the Father's love for his beloved Son.

God created human beings in a state of **original holiness and original justice**. This means that the first human beings were created good and established friendship with God. In particular, *original justice* means that they were in harmony with God, themselves, and creation. *Original holiness* means that they shared intimately in God's divine life. Human beings lost this sense of harmony and this intimate share in God's life by rejecting God. Although original holiness and original justice were lost, these aspects of creation reveal that God's intention from the beginning has been to share his life with humans.

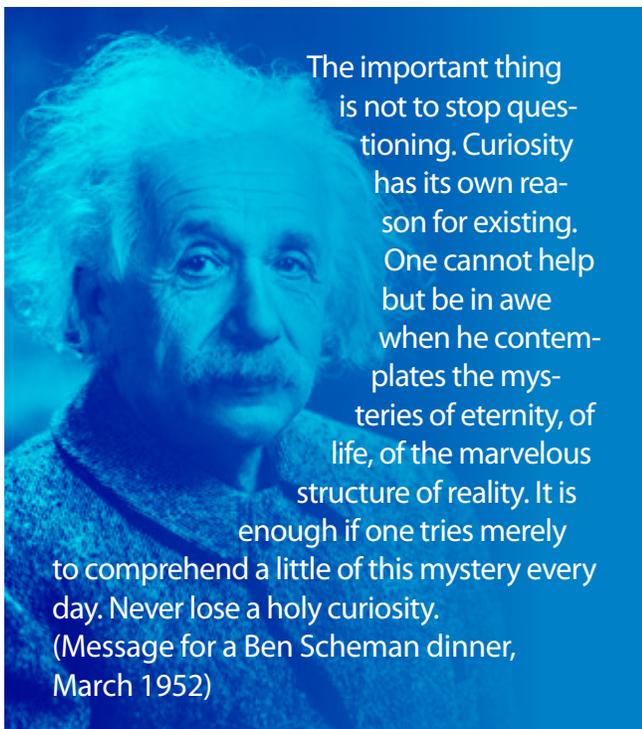
In the face of sin, God did not abandon humanity. He gradually revealed his love over the thousands of years leading to the coming of his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. God's purpose for his creation is most fully revealed in the Paschal Mystery. By his Death, Christ liberated the world from sin. By his Resurrection, he opened for you and all people a way to a new life as a son or daughter of the Father. The Sacrament of Baptism restores original holiness but not original justice (CCC, 400).

**original holiness and original justice** The state of man and woman in paradise before sin. The grace of original holiness was to share in the divine life [see CCC, 375]. "The inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman, and finally the harmony between the first couple and all of creation, comprised the state called 'original justice'" [CCC, 376]. "From [Adam and Eve's] friendship with God flowed the happiness of their existence in paradise" [CCC, 384].

# Knowing God through Natural Revelation

There are two main orders of knowledge of God. You can learn about God through *natural revelation*—by looking at the world around you and at human beings and by thinking about them, you can come to know the one personal God as the Creator of all things. But there is another order of knowledge that you cannot arrive at by your own powers: the order of *Divine Revelation*. “Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to [us]. . . . God has fully revealed [his plan for us] by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit” (CCC, 50).

As human beings, we can come to know God by looking at the world around us and at other human beings. We are by nature and vocation religious beings. We have a longing in our hearts for communion with God, in whom we find our happiness. God filled our hearts with a longing for him and gave us inquisitive minds. Albert Einstein had this to say about natural human inquiry:



The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.

(Message for a Ben Scheman dinner, March 1952)

Einstein was not a particularly religious man, but he saw asking questions as a process that can lead humans to seek God.

As you look to your future, you likely share similar questions with people your age from across the world:

- What can I do with my life so that I will be happy and make a difference?
- Will I succeed in my chosen career?
- Will I meet the love of my life and have close friends?

Questions about where you came from and where you are going are critical because the answers you arrive at will affect the meaning and orientation of your life and actions. Through the ages, men and women have tried to make sense out of reality and to seek meaning in the world around them, a quest that helps explain the existence of **philosophy**. Many people who think deeply about these kinds of questions have concluded that, behind the life you see and experience, there is a Source—something or someone greater than human beings, someone who brought life into existence and who sustains it. By means of reason, human beings can come to know God as the one personal source of reality, and they can recognize him as the end for which they were made. Furthermore, you can recognize something of the Creator through your conscience, which he has inscribed on your heart.

**philosophy** The human attempt to provide rational explanations for why things are the way they are and for how people should conduct their lives.

# Knowing God through Divine Revelation

Scientists have spent years enriching your understanding of the world’s origins and dimensions, the

# Trying to Comprehend God's Love



It is easy to say that you know God loves you without giving this truth much thought. In fact, in human terms, God's love pursues you and does not easily take no for an answer. He gives you many

chances to accept his love, as he has done for humans throughout history. Review from your previous study of salvation history some of these opportunities God provided for humans to accept his love:

- God created human beings in his image and likeness (Gn 1:27). Of all God's creatures, it is human beings alone that are "called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life" (CCC, 356).

- God manifested himself to the first humans, Adam and Eve, and offered them his first covenant. God "invited them to intimate communion with himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice" (CCC, 54; cf. 374). "From their friendship with God flowed the happiness of their existence in paradise" (CCC, 384). But because they turned away from God, they lost paradise and their friendship and intimacy with God. They also lost their harmony within themselves, with each other, and with all of creation (see CCC, 397–400). Sin, suffering, and death made their entrance into human history (see CCC, 400–406). Human beings stood in need of salvation.
- God's manifestation of himself to humans was not broken off by the sin of Adam and Eve. "After the fall, [God] buoyed them up with the hope of salvation, by promising redemption"; and despite the escalation of sin, he has never ceased to show his care for humans. "For he wishes to give eternal life to all those who seek salvation by patience in well-doing." (CCC, 55, quoting *Dei Verbum*, 3).
- "After the unity of the human race was shattered by sin, God at once sought to save humanity part by part" (CCC, 56). He formed a series of covenants as solemn commitments between himself and human beings, beginning with Noah. His covenant with Noah offered humans a chance to have a relationship with him through living uprightly (see CCC, 58).



- “In order to gather . . . scattered humanity, God call[ed] Abram from his country, his kindred, and his father’s house, and [made] him Abraham, that is, ‘the father of a multitude of nations’” (CCC, 59). God made a promise to Abraham that would be preserved by his descendants, the patriarchs and the Chosen People, and which would be fulfilled one day through Christ, when God gathered all his children into the unity of the Church (see CCC, 59–60).
- “After the patriarchs, God formed Israel as his people by freeing them from slavery in Egypt. He established with them the covenant of Mount Sinai and, through Moses, gave them his law so that they would recognize him and serve him as the one living and true God, the provident Father and just judge, and so that they would look for the promised Savior” (CCC, 62).
- God appointed judges, kings, and prophets to remind the people of ancient Israel about his promise of salvation, and to call them to a more faithful relationship with him. “Through the prophets, God form[ed] his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting covenant intended for all, to be written on their hearts” (CCC, 64).
- God sent his Son to the Jewish people: this was the pinnacle of human history. There remained division among Jewish groups at the time, and many Jewish leaders failed to recognize Jesus as God’s Chosen One. Many other Jews and Gentiles did indeed recognize that Jesus was Lord, and some became his first disciples. Jesus Christ, the Messiah spoken of by the prophets, was put to death. He rose from the dead three days later.
- Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to assemble believers into the community of the Church

as part of his promise to remain with us forever. This Church persists to this day. The Church has always consisted of sinners in various stages of holiness.

Given this history of God’s interaction with humans, what might your reaction be to the way God has been treated? Would you say something like:

- God, I hate to see people treat you like this.
- God, I question your taste in friends.
- God, if you stop treating them so lovingly, these people will get the message and do what you say.
- God, I understand why you might give people a few chances, but this many? People are taking advantage of you!

While it is often unhealthy for people to stay in human relationships with those who ignore or take advantage of them, it is God’s nature to love the people he created unconditionally. Because God creates people, he knows them. He understands human tendencies and behaviors. When people ignore him, their attitudes do not diminish him. While he unconditionally loves everyone and offers forgiveness to all, in the end, he does not force people to know and love him. People can freely choose to be with him forever or not. Through the prophet of the Book of Isaiah, God points out:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways—oracle of  
the LORD. (Is 55:8)

## JOURNAL REFLECTION

Write your responses to the following questions:

- Why would a person not choose God?
- What do you think God wants for your life?
- What keeps you from fully following God’s will?

way life came to be, and the appearance of human beings. Fantastic discoveries about rock formations, genes, and different species of life give you further reason to admire God the Creator. You can give thanks for the knowledge and wisdom God has granted to scholars and researchers. You might be one of these scientists ten years from now!

But the natural sciences have limits. They cannot discover the meaning of creation or answer questions such as *why* evil exists. Scientists can study *how* creation unfolded over time, but they cannot answer *why* the world exists in the first place.

- Why is there something rather than nothing?
- Why did God create, and what is creation's meaning?
- Why is there evil in the world, and how should we understand it?

These questions are beyond the scientific domain. Christians answer these questions based upon God's Revelation. Humans receive through Divine Revelation truths about which science and history can only speculate.

Divine Revelation, as you recall from earlier courses, is the way God communicates who he is to

humankind: a self-communication realized by his actions and words over time, most fully realized by the sending of his own Son, Jesus Christ. You learned in earlier courses how God's self-Revelation in Jesus is handed on in the Church through Scripture and Tradition, under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Church has been entrusted by God to preserve, guard, and hand on his Revelation for every generation. The Church invites us to enter into communion with God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and with the whole Church by professing the Creed. The *Catechism* describes the Creed as the "treasure of our soul" (CCC, 197) because it unites all believers in professing what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

Catholics profess the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed at Mass each Sunday and on holy days of obligation. The Creed begins:

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

To say these statements is to profess, together with the whole Church, that only God is Creator and that everything that exists came from him and depends on him. The Creed also makes clear that Christians believe that God is the source of both the "visible" and the "invisible" world. As a matter of faith, we understand that God has created spiritual realities beyond what is scientifically observable through our senses. The next subsections explore these themes in more depth.



## Things Visible

This chapter focuses primarily on those aspects of God's creation that are perceptible to the human senses or visible. You will learn about the two creation accounts at the beginning of the Book of Genesis. You will also learn about how these accounts tell us not just about the beginning of the world but also about the kind of relationship God wants to have with us. Seen from the perspective of what God has revealed to us in Jesus Christ, creation is the beginning of God's plan of loving goodness. God's plan for us begins with creation and continues through the Paschal Mystery, up to our heavenly communion with the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. "Creation is the foundation of 'all God's saving plans,' the 'beginning of the history of salvation' that culminates in Christ. . . . From the beginning, God envisaged the glory of the new creation in Christ" (CCC, 280, quoting the *General Catechetical Directory*, 51).

Every year, the Easter Vigil liturgy reminds Catholics of God's plan: the very first Scripture reading is the creation account, while the essence of the celebration is the Paschal Mystery, new creation through Christ. The first three chapters of Genesis present you with a good deal of information about why God created the universe, answers that cannot be found through scientific study.

## Things Invisible

So what are the "invisible" things God created that are mentioned in the Creed? God is Creator of "heaven and earth," which means that God created the universe and all that exists. Heaven is properly God's domain, as Jesus indicated in his prayer: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Mt 6:9). It is also the "place" where the angels and saints live, and it is where the redeemed experience eternal life in its fullness.

You may have learned from Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture about angels. During the Fourth Lateran Council, convened by Pope Innocent III in the thirteenth century, the Church's **Magisterium** articulated a revealed truth about creation that had been held by Christians since the beginning and, before them, by many Jewish people. They taught that God created three types of creatures out of nothing: fully spiritual creatures such as angels, fully bodily creatures such as animals, and human beings, who are both body and spirit.

Angels are purely spiritual creatures. The word *angel* comes from a Greek word, *aggelos*, which generally means "a messenger from God." *Angel* describes what these spiritual creatures do as God's servants and messengers. As purely spiritual creatures, angels possess intelligence, will, and personality. They are greater than any visible creature. They, like you, are also immortal spirits. They glorify God without stopping and serve him by assisting in his saving plan for human beings.

Angels belong to Christ in a special way because they were created through him and for him. They are *his* angels:

For in him were created all things in heaven  
and on earth,  
the visible and the invisible,  
whether thrones or dominions or principalities  
or powers;  
all things were created through him and  
for him. (Col 1:16)

**Magisterium** The bishops, in communion with the pope [the successor of St. Peter], who are the living and teaching office of the Church. The Magisterium is entrusted with guarding and handing on the Deposit of Faith and with authentically interpreting God's Revelation, in the forms of both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.



Angels belong to Christ still more because he has made them messengers of his saving plan. Angels have been active throughout salvation history. They announce God's plan of salvation near and far and serve God by helping his plan of salvation. See if you can remember their roles in these biblical situations before the birth of Jesus:

- at the Garden of Eden after God expelled the humans (Gn 3)
- with Hagar and Ishmael, after Abraham expelled them (Gn 16)
- with Lot, leaving the city (Gn 19)
- at the call of Moses (Ex 3)
- with Tobit, when God answered the prayers of this righteous man (Tb 3)
- with Mary, when she learned what God wanted of her (Lk 1)

In addition, angels announced other births and callings, and they assisted the prophets.

Angels also played an important role in Jesus' earthly life, serving him in his mission to save humanity. They praised God at his birth, served him in the desert, strengthened him during his agony in the garden, proclaimed his Resurrection, and explained his Ascension to his disciples. They will also be with him at the **Parousia**, when he returns to judge the world.

Angels help the Church as a whole in mysterious and powerful ways, and the Church *vernerates* them—that is, honors them with special devotion—as together humans and angels worship God. Prior to the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, you join the angels as you sing:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Angels also play a role in your life today. Psalm 91:10–12 refers to angels who guide you toward good thoughts, works, and words, protecting you from evil. Your **guardian angel** protects you and helps to lead you toward God.



*Like humans, angels were created by God; unlike humans, angels are purely spiritual creatures.*

**Parousia** The Second Coming of Christ, when the Lord will judge the living and the dead.

**guardian angel** The name for a messenger with free will and naturally superior intellect to humans. Since the third century, the Church has maintained, though not officially, that all the baptized have guardian angels who personally watch out for them. The Feast of the Guardian Angels is October 2.

# Humans: Body and Spirit

Created by God in his own image, you are at the same time *corporeal* (having a physical, material body) and spiritual. The second creation account illustrates this fact: “Then the LORD God formed the

man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gn 2:7). God willed that you be both body and spirit.

These are some implications of being both body and soul:

- You possess great dignity as a person. You are *someone* rather than *something*. You can know yourself, and you can love other people and your Creator.

- The God of love is a communion of Three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Because God made humanity in his own image, he calls men and women to love and be in communion with each other and with him.



- Though made of body and soul, you are a unity. Together, spirit and matter form in you a single nature because the soul takes on the “form” of the body. Your soul allows your material body to live.

- Your body is part of what makes you in the image of God.



- Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

- In your body, you encompass the elements of the material world and bring them to perfection so as to praise God the Creator.



- In the Bible, the terms *spirit* and *soul* are both used to show that you are ordered toward a supernatural end. In the spiritual tradition of the Church, the word *heart* also describes the depth of a person’s being.

- You must view your body as good and honor it because God created it and will raise it up on the last day. Your soul is immortal, which means that it will not die when it is separated from your body in death, and it will be reunited with your body at the final resurrection.

- Your parents did not “produce” your soul; rather, God created your soul immediately when you were conceived.

This final truth is represented in the story about an unborn baby under the heading “God Creates the Human Soul” on page 12.

# GOD CREATES THE HUMAN SOUL

When they heard that Micah was pregnant, her parents said that they would support her with any plan that did not include abortion. Both Micah and her boyfriend, Kyle, already wanted to keep the baby.

Micah and her parents prepared for teen pregnancy and college. Her parents asked her to pray about adoption, but they could see that she wanted to raise the baby herself, as Micah's mother had wanted to do when she was a teenager pregnant with Micah. The family began to get excited about the new baby.

The eighteen-week ultrasound revealed that the baby was a girl and that she had anencephaly, a condition where a great part of a baby's brain and skull do not develop properly, making it impossible for her to live long after birth if she makes it that far. The parents named her Ambra Storm. Micah's first instinct, when the doctor offered abortion as an option, was to refuse.

She did struggle with this option because she wondered if abortion would save her a good deal of heartache. Micah articulated her final reasons for deciding to bring the baby to term:

Because no matter what, she was my daughter. There was a life inside of me and I couldn't just take that away from her. She didn't choose to have this happen to her, so how could I choose to end her life just to save myself from more heartache?

Micah's parents also asked themselves whether they should encourage her to terminate the pregnancy. When their pastor supported Micah's decision to continue the pregnancy, they began to research the condition on the Internet and found no accounts of moms in similar situations who regretted bringing their babies to term.

Micah and her parents shifted gears, preparing her no longer for motherhood but for letting go of a baby. They found that laughing and crying together helped them to handle this. Micah began to enjoy her pregnancy and her very active baby. She was amazed, however, at how insensitive people were. They made rude comments about her as a woman pregnant with a baby headed for death. They asked, "Why don't you just abort?"

The doctor induced labor at thirty-five weeks because an excess amount of amniotic fluid was making it hard for Micah to breathe. Micah and Kyle's daughter was stillborn. The two of them spent three-and-a-half hours with her. They identified traits that she had inherited from both of them and their families. It was difficult to let the baby go when it was time for her to go to the funeral home. Micah said, "I got to meet my daughter, to hold and kiss her. I couldn't imagine not being able to share those few hours with her." Her mother added, "Treasure the short time these precious babies are with us. Remember them. Use the journey to strengthen relationships and experience the blessing of family" (Rebekah O'Brien, "Pregnant at 17 with a Baby Doomed to Die at Birth, She Chose Life," LifeSite-News.com, June 5, 2013).

## REFLECTION

- How do you think the title of this story describes Micah's experience?



# SECTION ASSESSMENT



## NOTE TAKING

Use the notes you made related to the St. Bonaventure quotation to help you answer the following questions.

1. Why did God create the world?
2. God created the world out of the love shared by the Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity; what does this imply about the relationship between creation and the Paschal Mystery?



## VOCABULARY

3. How does the existence of the intellectual discipline of *philosophy* shed light upon what humans can know about God based on creation?



## COMPREHENSION

4. Why did God start something in creation that would not be fulfilled for thousands of years?
5. Why is it important to give thanks for the knowledge and wisdom God has granted to scholars and researchers?
6. What did God want to reveal about himself in addition to his role as Creator?
7. Who lives in heaven?
8. Name a biblical passage that includes an angel, and explain the importance of that angel.



## CRITICAL ANALYSIS

9. Explain the meaning of the Albert Einstein quotation on page 5.



## REFLECTION

10. Which of the questions on page 5 has the most meaning for you? Explain.

## SECTION 1

# Understanding How to Read Scripture

### MAIN IDEA

Basic scriptural scholarship can help you understand the lessons the Church draws from the Book of Genesis.



The first three chapters of Genesis reveal important theological truths about the origins of creation, humans, and sin (see, for example, Gn 1:31). Sacred Scripture is the inspired Word of God. To discover its theological truths, you must be aware of the Church's teaching on Scripture as taught by the Magisterium. The Church reads Genesis (and all of Scripture) in a *typological* manner that recognizes

the unity of the Old and New Testaments. This means that what God did in Genesis and the other books of the Old Testament prefigures what he would do in the fullness of time in the Divine Person of his Son, Jesus Christ. Only by keeping this typological and *Christological* focus in mind can you understand the essential truths of these sacred readings. St. Augustine is famously credited with saying that “the New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.” A typological reading of Scripture recognizes the movement toward the fulfillment of God's plan in Christ.

Any examination of a particular text must be from this unified typological and Christological perspective. You can then employ other historical-critical and literary-theological methodologies to get a better glimpse at what the biblical authors intended in their writing. Reading the Bible with understanding requires recognizing that the Bible deals with a time, people, and culture foreign to people today. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains:

In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly,



## NOTE TAKING

**Prioritizing Information.** Number a notebook page with a list from one to three. After you read this section, write three important points [criteria] to keep in mind when reading the creation stories in the Book of Genesis. For example: *The form a biblical text takes is important for understanding its meaning.*

the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.

In order to discover *the sacred authors' intention*, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking, and narrating then current. (CCC, 109–110)

One way to access the sacred authors' intention is through applying certain critical methods or theories to Scripture to aid our understanding of what the text meant *in the context of its time*. Some of the methods you will learn about in this section are called *source criticism*, *redaction criticism*, and *form criticism*.

But these methods only tell you about what the biblical text meant *at that time*. They don't tell you what the Bible means to you now, as containing and revealing the living Word of God. Since Sacred Scripture is divinely inspired, the historical understanding of the sacred authors' intention must be brought to life and given meaning for people today by interpreting the Scripture “in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written.” The Second Vatican Council indicates three criteria for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it” (CCC, 111, quoting *Dei Verbum*, 12):

1. Pay attention to the content and unity of all of Scripture as a whole, not just as individual books of the Bible or individual passages.
2. Read Scripture in light of the Church's entire living and Sacred Tradition. The Holy Spirit inspires the Church to interpret the spiritual meaning of Scripture.

3. “Be attentive to the analogy of faith” (CCC, 114), which means setting the truths of faith both among themselves and in the context of God's entire Revelation.

Keeping these three criteria in mind, under the direction of the Magisterium of the Church, you can employ certain methods that allow an understanding of the Book of Genesis in its original context. Then, guided by these three criteria, you can ask what those biblical passages mean for people today.

## The Study of Scripture

To study Sacred Scripture, biblical scholars work according to the rules established by the Church toward “a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture in order that their research may help the Church to form a firmer judgment” (CCC, 119, quoting *Dei Verbum*, 12). According to an ancient tradition, Sacred Scripture can be distinguished between two *senses*: the literal and the spiritual.

The *literal sense* is what the words mean at the surface level and, as it was understood at the time, how things actually happened. The *spiritual sense*, or *mystical sense*, refers not just to the words themselves but rather to what is signified by the words. Three further divisions explain the spiritual sense more clearly. The *allegorical sense* recognizes the significance of Christ in scriptural events. The *moral sense* seeks instruction for living and behaving—what a person is to do. The *anagogical sense* derives heavenly matters—that is, the eternal life we are awaiting—from earthly matters described in the narrative. For example, the Church on earth is a sign of your destiny in heaven.

Consider this example: the Exodus of the Chosen People from Egypt in the Old Testament. The

Exodus was literally a historical event; allegorically, it represented Jesus' salvation of the world; morally, it symbolized the individual's conversion to God; anagogically, it embodied, in death, a person's departure from this life to the eternal life of heaven.

Applying these rules, biblical scholars have used methods that have yielded different theories for reading and understanding Sacred Scripture. It's important to underscore that these are only theories, not definitive practices. For example, one *source criticism* theory proposes that the two creation accounts in Genesis may have had different origins. One theory based on *redaction criticism* suggests that people who edited Genesis may have thought that it was important to keep both accounts.

The first creation account is from Genesis 1:1 to 2:4a, and the second is from Genesis 2:4b to 2:25. Although they may come from different sources and emphasize slightly different points, they both belong to the divinely inspired Sacred Scriptures, and they complement rather than contradict one another. Here are the main differences between the two accounts:

- The first creation account portrays creation as dramatic, orderly, and awesome. God is glorious and majestic.
- The second creation account shows the close relationship between God and his people (which was unique at the time, since most ancient peoples feared their gods). Out of compassion, God gave Adam a lush garden and different creatures, allowing him to name them.

To interpret the Bible correctly, you need to have some background information on the text so you can distinguish between different forms of writing. This is what *form criticism* helps to do: provide



In this twelfth-century manuscript, the stages of creation are depicted.

context and background. It searches into the history of how most biblical books took shape as oral tradition before being written down. Form criticism also identifies literary genres, or types of writing, so that you can better understand the human author's intention and actual meaning.



## Reading the Bible in the Spirit in Which It Was Written

Once you have made the best literal sense of the text, you are then ready to search for the spiritual meaning. What did God want to say to his people then, and what does he want to say to his people now? *Dei Verbum* (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*), a Second Vatican Council document that discussed Revelation in Scripture and in Church Tradition, states:

But, since Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted in the sacred Spirit in which it was written, no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture if the meaning of the sacred texts is to be correctly worked out. The living tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account along with the harmony which exists between elements of the faith. (12)

Reading the Bible in this way means that you cannot take a biblical passage out of its overall context. To understand what is meant by interpreting the

Bible in the Spirit in which it was written, according to the three criteria described above, consider the following verse from the first chapter of the Book of Genesis as an example:

God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth. (Gn 1:28)

This passage, taken out of context and apart from Scripture as a whole and the living Tradition of the Church, could be interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, someone could interpret the command to “subdue” the earth and to “have dominion” over all of the earth’s animals as meaning that humans can do whatever they want with the created world, including wasting natural resources or eliminating species. This interpretation would be mistaken, and this example serves as a warning that picking and choosing verses can lead to very misleading results! If the passage is interpreted in the Spirit in which it was written, then you must look at other biblical passages that are in proximity and the teachings of the Church to authentically understand this passage’s meaning. You would have to take into account, for

example, the following passages from Sacred Scripture and teachings from Sacred Tradition:

- The second creation account says that God created everything for man and man was to cultivate and care for the Garden of Eden and offer everything back to God (Gn 2:15).
- The later account of Noah and the Ark conveys the Israelites' understanding that God cared for animals, birds, and so on, not just for Noah and his family (see Gn 6:5–9:17).
- “Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. For believers, this becomes a question of fidelity to the Creator, since God created the world for everyone” (*Laudato Si'*, 94).

After consideration of these other passages, it becomes evident that the passage cannot be interpreted as saying that people can do whatever they want with creation. The point of this example is that understanding the Scriptures correctly involves trying to see every passage in reference to the Church's full and entire faith in Jesus.

The best way to read a passage in the spiritual sense is by uniting ourselves to the heart of the Church. The Church carries “the living memorial of God's Word” in her heart (CCC, 113). When you are united to the Church by faith and love, you encounter the living Word of God who dwells there and who comes to meet us. The Holy Spirit who inspired the Sacred Scriptures (see CCC, 105; 107) is the very same Spirit who was poured into your heart to draw you to Christ (see CCC, 737; cf. Rom 5:5). This same Holy Spirit is poured out into the Church and “*makes present* the mystery of Christ” at the heart of the Church, “supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile [you and God], to *bring [you] into communion* with God” (CCC, 737).

## Reading Genesis in the Spiritual Sense

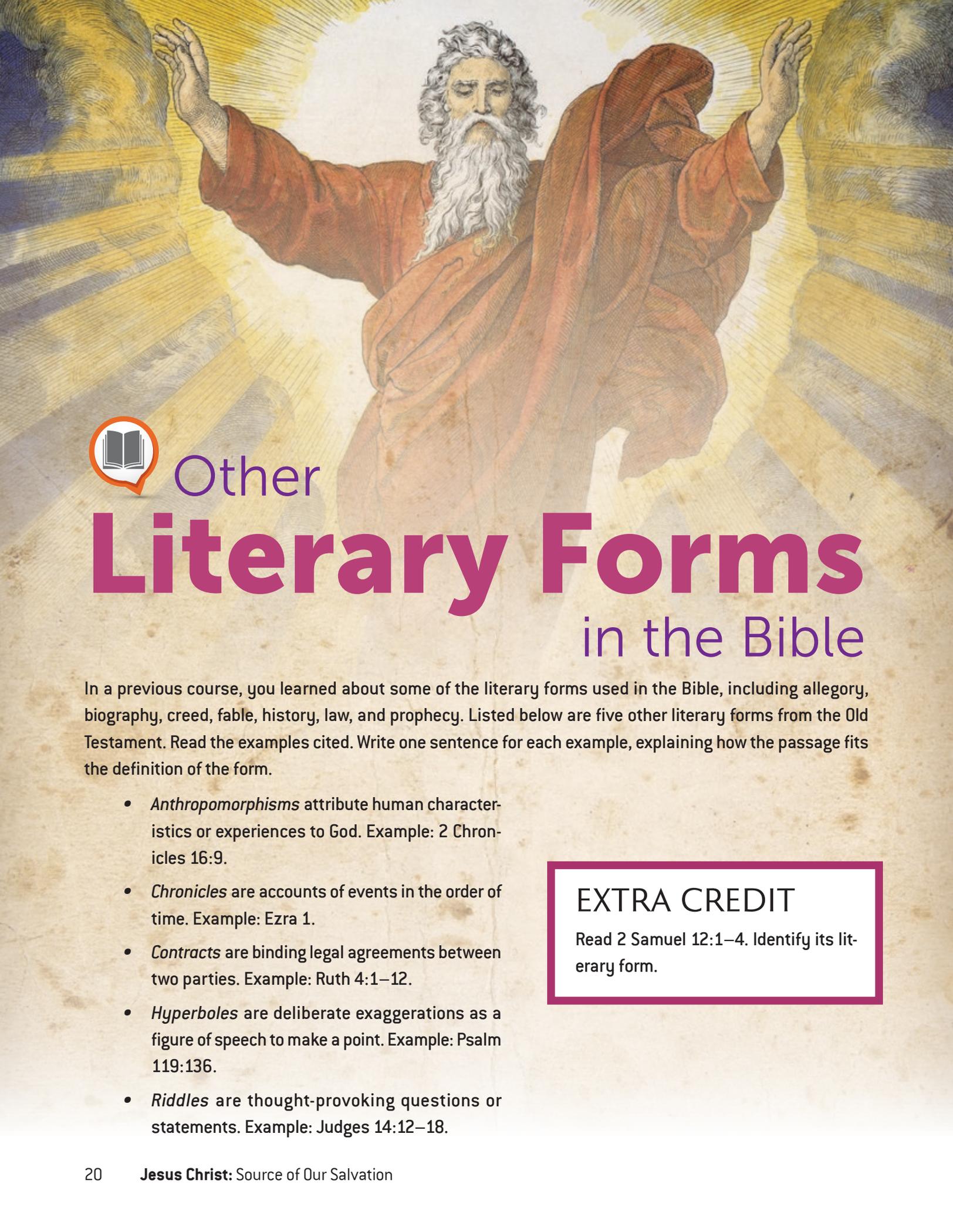
Once you have a literal sense of the creation accounts, you also want to read them in a specifically spiritual sense, which includes three approaches:

**1** *The allegorical sense* seeks to understand Scripture by recognizing its connection and significance to Christ. For example, the creation account of God breathing life into the first humans foreshadows Christ bringing all humans to new life through the Paschal Mystery.

**2** *The moral sense* seeks to understand how Scripture teaches people to act more justly. The Genesis creation accounts teach, for example, that one gender should not be viewed as superior to the other. They also teach that all humans should be stewards of creation.

**3** *The anagogical sense* reminds you that the sacred words are intended to lead you to eternal life. You might think, “If I want to go to heaven, what do I need to do to treat men and women fairly and to respect God's gift of the earth?” Scripture provides answers to this and other similar questions.

Although it is possible for you to achieve a fairly good literal and spiritual understanding of biblical passages on your own, it is the task of the Magisterium of the Church to help Christians to read, interpret, and judge a biblical text according to these senses of Scripture. The Magisterium is responsible for watching over and interpreting God's Word.



Other

# Literary Forms in the Bible

In a previous course, you learned about some of the literary forms used in the Bible, including allegory, biography, creed, fable, history, law, and prophecy. Listed below are five other literary forms from the Old Testament. Read the examples cited. Write one sentence for each example, explaining how the passage fits the definition of the form.

- *Anthropomorphisms* attribute human characteristics or experiences to God. Example: 2 Chronicles 16:9.
- *Chronicles* are accounts of events in the order of time. Example: Ezra 1.
- *Contracts* are binding legal agreements between two parties. Example: Ruth 4:1–12.
- *Hyperboles* are deliberate exaggerations as a figure of speech to make a point. Example: Psalm 119:136.
- *Riddles* are thought-provoking questions or statements. Example: Judges 14:12–18.

## EXTRA CREDIT

Read 2 Samuel 12:1–4. Identify its literary form.

# SECTION ASSESSMENT



## NOTE TAKING

Use the list you prepared to help you answer the following question.

1. What are three criteria for interpreting Sacred Scripture to keep in mind when reading the creation stories in Genesis?



## COMPREHENSION

2. Explain the differences between two senses for reading Scripture: literal and spiritual.
3. How must a reader of Sacred Scripture discover the intentions of a biblical author?
4. Explain the three approaches of the spiritual sense of reading Scripture.
5. Who is ultimately responsible for biblical interpretation in the Catholic Church?



## CRITICAL ANALYSIS

6. Why is it important to read Scripture “in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written”?
7. Which two of the three spiritual senses do you think most people use when reading the Bible? Explain your answer.

## SECTION 2

# The First Creation Account (Genesis 1:1–2:4a)

### MAIN IDEA

The first creation account reveals God’s power and majesty as he creates the earth and its inhabitants from nothing in six days.



Both creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 are part of **primeval history**. Recall that in Sacred Scripture, God speaks to human beings in a human way. This means that biblical authors oftentimes use stories, symbols, or other devices from the culture of their time to express deep religious truths to their contemporaries in a meaningful way. The Israelites, inspired by the Holy Spirit, used some of the

**primeval history** The accounts humans have told and recorded about the origins of the earth, humans, other creatures, languages, and cultures.

traditional stories and symbols of their neighbors while correcting them to convey their belief in the one, true God—YHWH—who entered their history in a radical new way. Despite the symbolic nature of the creation accounts, they do describe an actual event that occurred at the beginning of human history, whether or not the event occurred exactly as narrated in Genesis.

It is important to ask what the intention of the biblical authors was in writing these kinds of accounts. Some readers expect the Bible to contain the kind of information you would find in scientific journals today, so they compare the Bible’s account of creation to current scientific research about the theory of evolution. It is important to ask what the intention of the biblical authors was in writing these kinds of accounts. Today, scientific questions and scientific writing are very widespread. But if you look at the creation accounts, you find that their question and intent was not trying to provide a primitively scientific account of the beginning of the world but rather to express something much deeper. The biblical authors were



## NOTE TAKING

**Identifying Concepts.** The first creation account in the Book of Genesis communicates many truths. As you go through this section, identify at least four of these truths. Organize them in a numbered list.

Truths

1. *There is only one God.*
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* depicts God breathing life into the first human.

not much concerned with *how* creation happened scientifically—in fact, the Bible spends no time on that question since it has little to no importance for our salvation. Rather, the biblical authors were primarily concerned with expressing their understanding of God and the meaning of creation. In particular, you see the biblical authors using language, myths, stories, and other devices from the religious beliefs of their neighbors in order to distinguish their understanding of God and to make it meaningful for the people of their time and place.

Among the world's early human civilizations, the Hebrews (Israelites) were one of the few to believe in one God. For example, the Babylonians, a nearby people who took the Israelites into captivity after conquering the southern kingdom (Judah), were polytheists. The Babylonian creation story, the *Enuma Elish*, is the oldest creation myth discovered to date.

Both the *Enuma Elish* and the creation accounts in Genesis have the literary form of a myth. Here, *myth* does not mean “false story,” as it can in

everyday language. In the literary sense, a myth is a narrative that seems to relate actual events but is primarily symbolic, often associated with religious beliefs. Ancient peoples used myths to express spiritual truths and basic cultural beliefs. Many of these ancient stories used common themes and symbols like creation near or from water, battles between heavenly powers, and the creation of humans from the earth. In a Christian context, the Genesis creation accounts reveal spiritual truths of who God is, how God interacts with human beings, the nature of God's creation, the interaction between good and evil, and so on. They are not intended to convey scientific truth or historical truth in the way people think of those categories today.

When you read a myth, you should look for the symbolism within the story rather than focusing on its historical or scientific accuracy. God inspired the writers of the creation accounts in Genesis to use myth as the best way to communicate religious truths to their audience.

**Enuma Elish** The Babylonian epic or myth of creation.

# The **FIRST CREATION** ACCOUNT AND THE **ENUMA ELISH**

The Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, an ancient pagan creation myth, was the prevalent creation myth among the contemporaries of the biblical authors. It is the creation account that the first readers would likely have been familiar with. By incorporating language and concepts from this pagan creation myth, the biblical authors are able to accentuate the uniqueness of God and the meaning of his creation. This point serves to stress that these creation accounts are

not a replacement for or competitor with scientific or historical accounts. Rather, they reveal to us in the humble vessels of human language the mystery of God's love for humans as he created the world.

Below is a comparison of the first creation account in Genesis 1:1–2:4a with the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*. The *Enuma Elish* is a much longer text. Note the obvious theological differences between the two.

## CONTRASTING THE BABYLONIAN CREATION STORY (*ENUMA ELISH*) WITH THE FIRST CREATION ACCOUNT FROM GENESIS

<b>ENUMA ELISH</b>	<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR BABYLONIAN RELIGION</b>	<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR JEWISH RELIGION</b>	<b>BOOK OF GENESIS</b>
<p>“When of the gods none had been called into being . . .”</p>	<p><b>There are multiple gods.</b></p> <p><b>For you:</b> Praying means praying while only hoping that one or another god will respond.</p>	<p><b>There is only one God.</b></p> <p><b>For you:</b> Praying means praying to the one, true God who desires a relationship with you and who has the power to grant the relationship.</p>	<p>“In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth . . .” [1:1]</p>
<p>“Tiamat made weighty her handiwork, Evil she wrought against the gods her children. To avenge Apsu, Tiamat planned evil.” (Apsu and Tiamat were the gods who first existed.)</p>	<p><b>The gods commit evil acts. They are both constructive and destructive.</b></p> <p><b>For you:</b> You awake each day wondering whether the gods are in a constructive or destructive mood and what that means for you.</p>	<p><b>God makes only good things. He is creative and not destructive.</b></p> <p><b>For you:</b> When destructive events come along, you can feel confident that God did not cause them, though he will accompany you through them.</p>	<p>“God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.” [1:31]</p>

**ENUMA ELISH**

“Let then thy host be equipped, let thy weapons be girded on! Stand! I and thou, let us join battle!”

**IMPLICATIONS FOR BABYLONIAN RELIGION**

**The gods fight one another.**

**For you:**  
If the gods are violent toward one another, will they use violence against you?

**IMPLICATIONS FOR JEWISH RELIGION**

**The communion of Divine Persons that makes up the Blessed Trinity is at peace. After creation, God can rest on the seventh day.**

**For you:**  
God is not violent. God never desires anything harmful for you.

**BOOK OF GENESIS**

“God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation.” (2:3)

“[He] devised a cunning plan. He split her up like a flat fish into two halves; One half of her he established as a covering for heaven.”

**The gods form the world out of a dead god who lost in battle.**

**For you:** The world results from a cunning plan. Is the world good? How powerful are these gods?

**God forms the world from nothing.**

**For you:** If God can create the world out of nothing, how much more can he protect and love you? The world is good.

“And the earth was without form or shape, with darkness over the abyss and a mighty wind sweeping over the waters.” (1:2b)

“I will create man who shall inhabit the earth, That the service of the gods may be established, and that their shrines may be built.”

**The gods created humans for the purpose of serving the gods and establishing their shrines.**

**For you:** If serving gods is your purpose, do you have free will? Is anyone looking out for your well-being?

**God created humans so that they could join him forever in love.**

**For you:** God created you to share in his own nature, and he gives you responsibilities regarding creation.

“Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.” (1:26)

# Religious and Theological Truths of the First Creation Account

Now that you have studied the *textual form* of the first account of creation in Genesis, pay more attention to its *theological significance*. Always keep in mind that the Bible is inspired text and God is its true author. The first creation account is not a scientific explanation of the beginning of the universe. God inspired the Bible's human authors to reveal important *spiritual and theological* truths about creation that are necessary for salvation. These truths are revealed without error. The first creation account reveals the following truths:

- **There is only one God.** While the ancient Babylonians and others believed in multiple gods, the biblical authors affirmed that there is only one God, who is eternal. He created out of nothing all that exists outside of himself. He made all things by himself, with the Son and the Holy Spirit; creation is the common work of the Blessed Trinity (see CCC, 292).
- **God planned creation.** God created the world in an orderly way to share his own self, wisdom, and goodness with humanity (see CCC, 295). Creation did not result from chaotic forces, warring gods, fate, or chance.
- **God created the world out of nothing.** Human artists can create incredible things. Advances in human technology also demonstrate the incredible capacities of humans to make new things. These things shed light upon God's creation in a special way. When a person makes things, he or she always uses preexisting materials, such as metal, chemicals, and so forth. But when God created the universe, he created it from *nothing*. God did not take preexisting "stuff" and make the world out of it; rather, he made all things *out of nothing*.

- **God ordered the world and made it good.** Ancient peoples believed that much of material reality was evil and constantly at war with spiritual elements in the universe. In contrast, Jews and Christians see in Genesis a positive view of created reality: material creation is good, not the result of magic or of the workings of false gods. God is pleased with everything he made, especially human beings.
- **God created humans in his own image, male and female.** Humans are unique among all creatures for this reason. Made in God's own image and likeness, humans alone are called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that humans were created, and this is the fundamental reason for your own uniqueness (see CCC, 356). Humans are entrusted with responsibility for the rest of creation.

## Aspects of Your Uniqueness

- You possess great dignity, value, and worth. A human is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake" (CCC, 356, quoting *Gaudium et Spes*, 24).
- You are able to participate "in the light and power of the divine Spirit" (CCC, 1704). By your intellectual abilities, you can understand the order of things established by God. You can hear God's voice in your conscience, urging you to do what is right and to avoid what is evil (see CCC, 1706). By your free will, you can choose to direct your life toward the good (see CCC, 1704). Your obligation to follow God's law "is fulfilled in the love of God and neighbor" (CCC, 1706).
- You—and every other person on earth—reflect the divine image. Your gender is part of your identity.



# The Sabbath

By saying God rested on the seventh day, the biblical author reminds God's Chosen People of their own obligation to worship God on the Sabbath (from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday). God's actions are a model for human action. The Sabbath is a day of rest, when people pause from their everyday work in the world to worship God. For the Israelites, "the Sabbath is for the Lord, holy and set apart for the praise of God, his work of creation, and his saving actions on behalf of Israel" (CCC, 2171). When the Jews were in captivity, the Sabbath observance also helped them distinguish their identity as God's Chosen People among a foreign people, the Babylonians.

The Sabbath, as described in the Book of Genesis, represents the completion and fulfillment of creation—the goal for which creation was made; namely, the glory of God. Jesus' Resurrection took place on the "first day of the week," the day after the Sabbath. This "eighth day" symbolizes the new creation ushered in by Christ's Resurrection (see CCC, 2174). Catholics (and most other Christians) observe Sunday as the Lord's Day, which fulfills the Sabbath obligation.

Importantly, the Eucharist is celebrated on Sunday as the memorial of the Paschal Mystery—that is, of the work of salvation accomplished by the life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. Christ himself, along with this work of salvation, is made present in the Eucharist. Sunday is the preeminent day for the worship of God, when the faithful gather "to listen to the word of God and take part in the Eucharist, thus calling to mind the Passion, Resurrection, and glory of the Lord Jesus, and giving thanks to God" (CCC, 1167). Catholics also rest from regular work and activity on Sundays.

## ASSIGNMENT

Analyze how you spent the past two Sundays. In your journal, note what you did to show that you take "Sabbath rest" and the "Sunday obligation" seriously. If your review shows that you struggle to "keep holy the Lord's day," write out some plans to help you observe it more faithfully this coming weekend.



The first creation account tells us that land-dwelling animals were created on the sixth day and that God created humans immediately afterward.

You have been created male or female. Both genders are equal, with inalienable dignity—that is, dignity that cannot be changed or taken away. Physical, moral, and spiritual difference and complementarity between genders are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life.

- Your human nature is a unity of the spiritual and material worlds. You have a body and a soul. Every soul is created at the moment of conception by God and is immortal. God willed you to be whole and entire, comprising body and soul. Your soul is endowed with intellect and free will, reflecting the image of God. Your human nature is a reflection of Christ, who revealed what it means to be in the image of God, as he is God’s Revelation.
- You have been given a place of honor in creation. God has placed

humans, created in his image and likeness, at the summit of creation. You are responsible for taking care of and developing the many gifts of creation God entrusted to you. You are a steward of God’s creation.

- From the moment of your conception, you were “destined for eternal beatitude” (CCC, 1703).

- **God blessed the Sabbath and made it holy.** The writer of the first account tells how God rested on the seventh day of creation. Obviously, God does not need to rest. The inspired words in this passage show the meaning of creation. They tell how the world was created “with a view to the sabbath and therefore for the worship and adoration of God” (CCC, 347). (See “The Sabbath” on page 27.)

All these truths emerged from the first creation account. They highlight the Church’s belief in the one, powerful, good, wise, and loving God who shares his life with his creatures.

# SECTION ASSESSMENT



## NOTE TAKING

Use your notes to help you complete the following item.

1. Choose one of the truths you identified in this section, and write two or three sentences about what it means to you.



## VOCABULARY

2. Define *primeval history*.
3. Use the word *myth* appropriately in a sentence.



## COMPREHENSION

4. What are three differences between the Babylonian gods and the God of Israel?
5. What type of unity exists in human nature?
6. Why do most Christians worship God on Sundays?



## CRITICAL ANALYSIS

7. How would your worldview be different if you had grown up in ancient Babylon?



## REFLECTION

8. What are some of the benefits of the use of figurative and symbolic language in Genesis as opposed to scientific language?
9. What are some challenges you and your peers encounter when trying to keep Sunday holy?

## SECTION 3

# The Second Creation Account (Genesis 2:4b–25)

### MAIN IDEA

The second creation account reveals the care and concern that God feels for his newly created people and shows what he wanted to provide for them.



The second creation account is written in what might be described as a more “down-to-earth” style and portrays God with human qualities. Many biblical scholars have dated its origin to sometime in the tenth century BC.

In this creation account, God focuses on people. God resembles a human potter, molding Adam’s body like a delicate sculpture and breathing his spirit, the breath of life, into his creation. This intimate picture reveals the loving relationship between YHWH and the first human beings. In the first creation account, God creates humans last, while in this second account, YHWH creates humans before any other creatures.

The author describes a compassionate God who cares for Adam by creating a garden and sending him animals for companionship. God puts Adam in charge of creation by permitting him to name the animals. (In the ancient world, the power to name something gave one control over what was named.) Animals, however, do not fulfill Adam’s basic human need for companionship.

The author narrates Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib. This image highlights women’s dignity and equality with men. This second account provides



## NOTE TAKING

**Finding Parallels.** Create a chart like the one below. At the top on the left, print “First Account,” and on the right, “Second Account.” As you go through this section, identify three words or phrases from the second creation account that describe God and list them in the right column of your chart. Then list three characteristics of God from the first creation account in the left column. Connect them with a green line if they are mostly similar, a yellow line if they are somewhat similar, and a red line if they are dissimilar.

First Account	Second Account
<i>God talks with the first humans.</i>	<i>God interacts with the first man.</i>

an **etiology** of marriage—that is, a causal explanation of why men and women leave their own families “and the two of them become one body” (Gn 2:24), entering into a close relationship that mirrors God’s own relationship with them. The love between a man and a woman reflects the love between God and humanity. In Catholic theology, a sacramental marriage reflects Christ’s love for his Church.

With this knowledge, you can better understand why the final editor of Genesis was inspired by God to include two different creation accounts. Together, they reveal very important truths about God: the awe-inspiring sole Creator of the universe (first account) is intimately concerned with the man and woman who are the jewels of his creation (second account).

## Truths of the Second Creation Account

These are some truths you can glean from the second creation account:

- **Humans are created both equal and different.** God willed that there be men and women. Each possesses inalienable and equal dignity as a person, “since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God” (CCC, 2334, quoting *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 6).
- **Adam and Eve were born in a state of original holiness and original justice.** Recall that this describes the harmony within the human person, between humans and God,

**etiology** An explanation of the cause of something. In the Bible, etiology appears as narrative, typically reaching back to the distant past to describe the core meaning of something that we experience universally. For example, although Genesis attributes the origin of sin to Adam and Eve in the past, it is also an explanation of humanity’s rejection of God at all times, even today.

between man and woman, and between people and all of creation.

- **God willed that man and woman be for each other.** Men and women were created for each other, for companionship, to be helpmates to each other, and to share in God’s work of creating new life.
- **God is not in the image of humans.** This is an important distinction. It means that God is neither male nor female. God is pure spirit, and he is beyond embodied gender such as humans and animals have. This does not mean, however, that men, especially as fathers and husbands, and women, especially as mothers and wives, do not uniquely reflect something of God’s infinite perfection.



When God created human beings, he willed that men and women be equal. He intentionally created the two sexes, communicating that each gender is good. Men and women possess an inalienable dignity that comes to them directly from God the Creator. Each sex has equal significance. “In their ‘being-man’



and ‘being-woman,’ they reflect the Creator’s wisdom and goodness” (CCC, 369).

God made man and woman and willed them “for each other.” God says, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him” (Gn 2:18). After God creates the woman, the man says,

“This one, at last, is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh.” (Gn 2:23a)

God created man and woman to form a “communion of persons” in which each can help the other specifically as masculine and feminine. In marriage, God designed man and woman to participate in his creative work by transmitting human life and by imitating the Creator’s generosity. God shows that this union is not to be broken. “What God has joined together, let not man put asunder” (CCC, 2336, quoting Mt 19:6). Physical and spiritual differences between men and women help spouses support each other’s strengths and balance out each

other’s weaknesses. This complementarity makes for a healthier marriage and family life.

Through Catholic theology, you also come to understand more deeply the significance of the intimacy shared by Adam and Eve as described in the second creation account. They are two persons, and yet they “become one” (Gn 2:24). The Catholic faith holds that God is an eternal communion of love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In a way infinitely greater than and different from human beings, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different and unique Persons, and yet they are one, united in love, power, and being. God created man and woman to express something of his inner life, and so that we would be capable of sharing in the Blessed Trinity’s communion of love. The differences between man and woman (“the two”) become an expression of God’s intimate communion when man and woman “become one” (Gn 2:24).

# SECTION ASSESSMENT



## NOTE TAKING

Use the chart you created to help you answer the following question.

1. Which pair of descriptive words or phrases presented the greatest contrast between the first and second creation accounts? Why?



## VOCABULARY

2. Define *etiology*. How does this term relate to the second creation account from the Book of Genesis?



## COMPREHENSION

3. What evidence is there from the second creation account that God is compassionate and that he cared for Adam?
4. Why is God without gender?



## CRITICAL ANALYSIS

5. What is the value of including both creation accounts in the Book of Genesis?
6. Explain the meaning of the following: “God did create man and woman in his own image, but God is neither in man’s nor in woman’s image.”



## REFLECTION

7. Does one of the two creation accounts present God in a way that more closely resembles your own image of him? Explain.

# Section Summaries



## Focus Question

**What does God’s creation tell you about his plan for salvation?**

Complete one of the following:

- ➔ Reflect back on your life, and identify three of your best or most memorable experiences. Write two or three paragraphs recounting at least one of the experiences. Incorporate one or more of the following in your description: God, the name of a special person, something about the natural world, or an insight from your inner spiritual life.
- ➔ Sketch out a theoretical “life plan” for yourself from birth to death. How does your life plan prepare you for *eternal* life?
- ➔ Identify five steps you could take to foster holiness and justice in your life.



INTRODUCTION (PAGES 3–14)

## God Created Humans to Share in His Own Life

God created humans with the intention that they would be happy in an eternal, loving relationship with him. After sin entered the world, this relationship would only be possible through the Paschal Mystery. God sent his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to become one with humanity, to express the Father’s love for the world, and to offer his life to reconcile the world with his Father. His life, Death, and Resurrection reveal the mystery of God’s love for humanity—the very love out of which God created the world. The first three chapters of the Book of Genesis present the mystery of creation. These texts present information about *why* God created the world and the *meaning* of creation, rather than *how* he did so, providing answers that cannot be found through scientific study.

God is the Creator of all things, both spiritual and material. Angels are also part of God’s creation. These creatures, who are invisible yet present, belong to Christ and are used in his saving mission of bringing us into communion with the Father. The Book of Genesis sheds light upon our uniqueness and awesome dignity. Both material and spiritual, we were created in the “image of God,” endowed with reason, freedom, and the desire for communion with God. Humans were created by God as male and female, who are equal yet different, reflecting the loving communion of Divine Persons that is God. Human beings—and through us all of creation—are destined for the glory of God (see CCC, 353).

- ➔ Read paragraphs 293–294 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Based on this reading, write one paragraph that answers the question: Why did God create the world?