

The Didache

[DID-uh-kay]

The *Didache* is the first known Christian catechesis. Written in the first century, the *Didache* is the earliest known Christian writing outside of Scripture. The name of the work, "*Didache*," is indeed appropriate for such a catechesis because it comes from the Greek word for "teaching," and indicates that this writing contains the teaching of the Apostles.

The *Didache* is a catechetical summary of Christian sacraments, practices, and morality. Though written in the first century, its teaching is timeless. The *Didache* was probably written by the disciples of the Twelve Apostles, and it presents the Apostolic Faith as taught by those closest to Jesus Christ. This series of books takes the name of this early catechesis because it shares in the Church's mission of passing on that same Faith, in its rich entirety, to new generations.

Below is an excerpt from the *Didache* in which we see a clear example of its lasting message, a message that speaks to Christians of today as much as it did to the first generations of the Church. The world is different, but the struggle for holiness is the same. In the *Didache*, we are instructed to embrace virtue, to avoid sin, and to live the Beatitudes of our Lord.

My child, flee from everything that is evil and everything that is like it. Do not be wrathful, for wrath leads to murder, nor jealous nor contentious nor quarrelsome, for from all these murder ensues.

My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to fornication, nor a filthy-talker nor a lewd-looker, for from all these adulteries ensue.

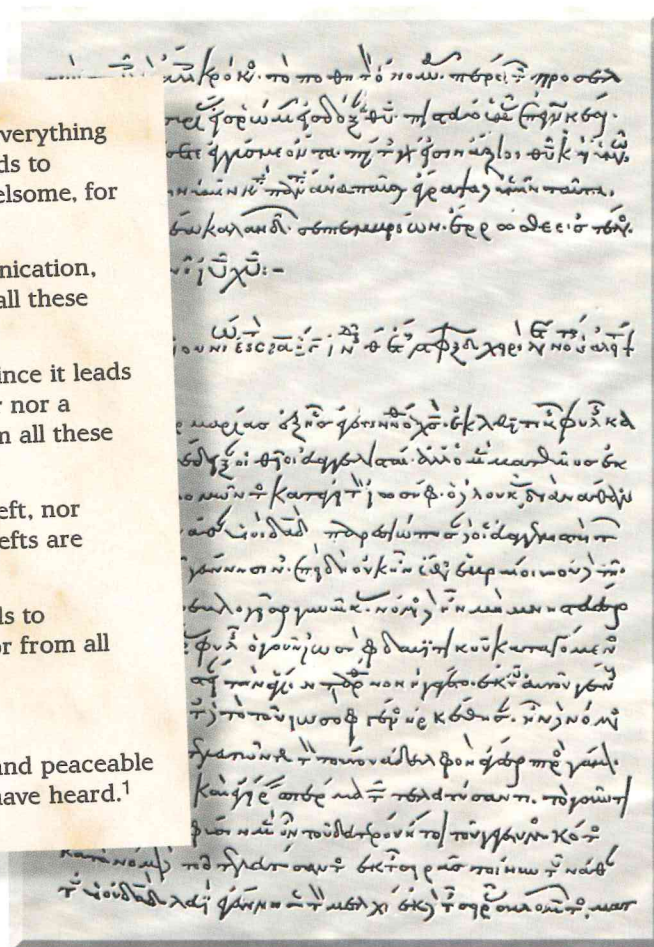
My child, do not be an interpreter of omens, since it leads to idolatry, nor an enchanter nor an astrologer nor a magical purifier, nor wish to see them, for from all these idolatry arises.

My child, do not be a liar, for lying leads to theft, nor avaricious nor conceited, for from all these thefts are produced.

My child, do not be a complainer, since it leads to blasphemy, nor self-willed nor evil-minded, for from all these blasphemies are produced.

Be meek, for the meek will inherit the earth.

Be long-suffering and merciful and guileless and peaceable and good, and revere always the words you have heard.¹



The *Didache* is the teaching of the Apostles and, as such, it is the teaching of the Church. Accordingly, this book series makes extensive use of the most recent comprehensive catechesis provided to us, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *Didache* series also relies heavily on Sacred Scripture, the lives of the saints, the Fathers of the Church, and the teaching of Vatican II as witnessed by the pontificate of John Paul II.

1. Swett, Ben H. "The Didache (The Teaching)." © January 30, 1998. <http://bswett.com/1998-01Didache.html>

Understanding The Scriptures

A Complete Course On Bible Study



Author: Scott Hahn, Ph.D.
General Editor: Rev. James Socias



MIDWEST THEOLOGICAL FORUM

Woodridge, Illinois

FROM THE CATECHISM *continued*

1962 The Old Law is the first stage of revealed Law. Its moral prescriptions are summed up in the Ten Commandments. The precepts of the Decalogue lay the foundations for the vocation of man fashioned in the image of God; they prohibit what is contrary to the love of God and neighbor and prescribe what is essential to it. The Decalogue is a light offered to the conscience of every man to make God's call and ways known to him and to protect him against evil:

God wrote on the tables of the Law what men did not read in their hearts
(St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 57, 1: PL 36, 673).

2465 The Old Testament attests that *God is the source of all truth*. His Word is truth. His Law is truth. His "faithfulness endures to all generations" (Ps 119: 90; cf. Prv 8: 7; 2 Sm 7: 28; Ps 119: 142; Lk 1: 50) (Mt 5: 33). Since God is "true," the members of his people are called to live in the truth (Rom 3: 4; cf. Ps 119: 30).

2585 From the time of David to the coming of the Messiah, texts appearing in these sacred books show a deepening in prayer for oneself and in prayer for others (Ezr 9: 6-15; Neh 1: 4-11; Jon 2: 3-10; Tb 3: 11-16; Jdt 9: 2-14). Thus the Psalms were gradually collected into the five books of the Psalter (or "Praises"), the masterwork of prayer in the Old Testament.

2586 The Psalms both nourished and expressed the prayer of the People of God gathered during the great feasts at Jerusalem and each Sabbath in the synagogues. Their prayer is inseparably personal and communal; it concerns both those who are praying and all men. The Psalms arose from the communities of the Holy Land and the Diaspora, but embrace all creation. Their prayer recalls the saving events of the past, yet extends into the future, even to the end of history; it commemorates the promises God has already kept, and awaits the Messiah who will fulfill them definitively. Prayed by Christ and fulfilled in him, the Psalms remain essential to the prayer of the Church (cf. *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* 100109).



This miniature depicting King David is from the *French Bible of Hainburg*, one of the finest illuminated manuscripts ever created. The *French Bible* was published in Northern France between 1300 and 1320 A.D.

Endnote

1. Mt 5: 17-18.

Chapter 3

The Creation of The World

*All of creation is a great temple
for the worship of God the creator.*

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The Creation of The World

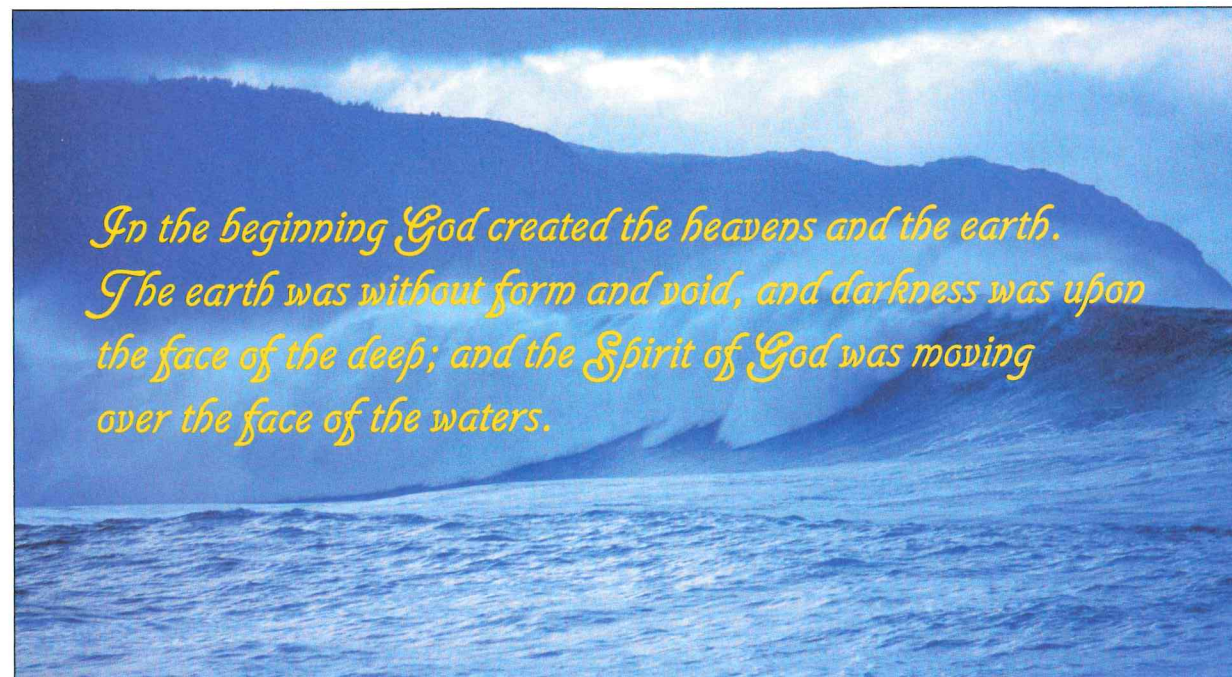


Read

Genesis
1:1 - 4:16

"In the beginning," Genesis tells us, "God created the heavens and the earth."

Everything that exists was created by God. The first chapter of the first book in the Bible is a poetic narrative that tells us what we need to know to understand why God created. When we outline it, we can see how carefully constructed it is:



*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon
the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving
over the face of the waters.*

Days 1-3: Creating Form

First Day: TIME

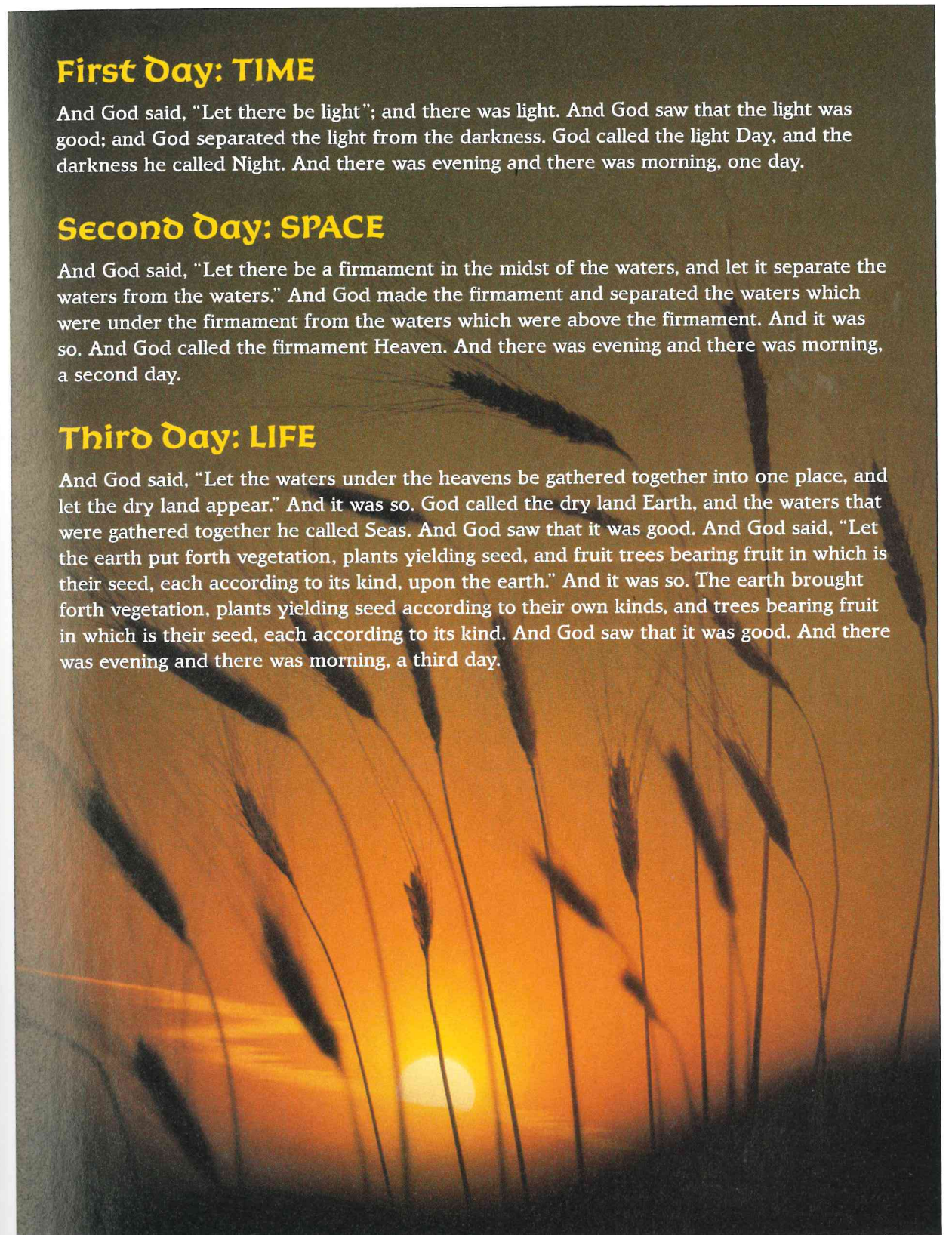
And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

Second Day: SPACE

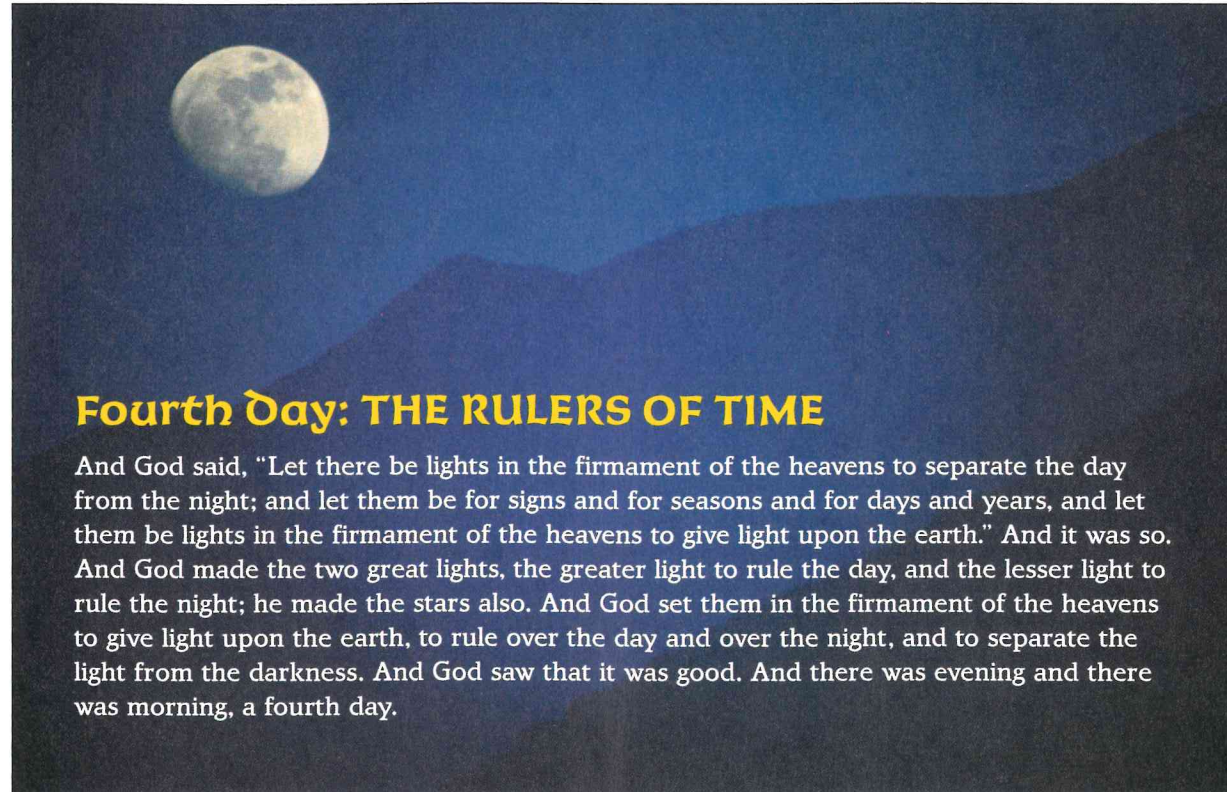
And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

Third Day: LIFE

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

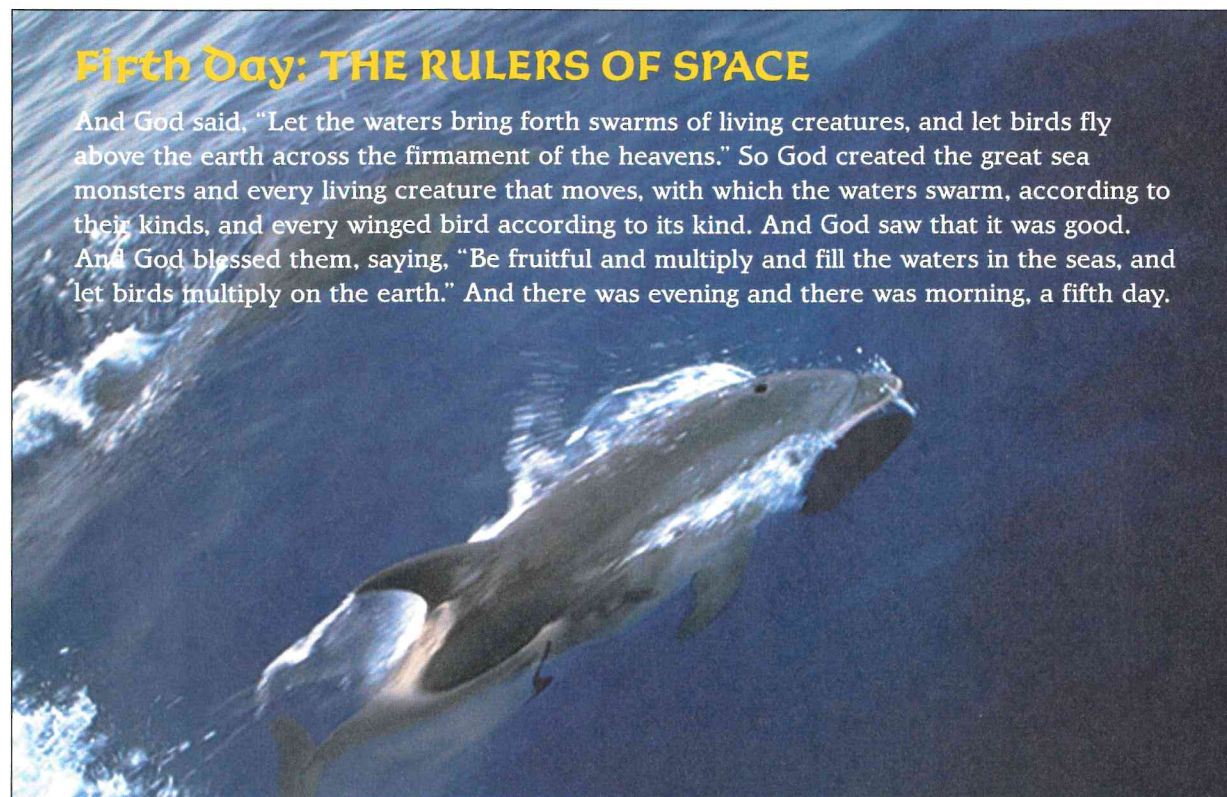


Days 4-6: Filling The Void



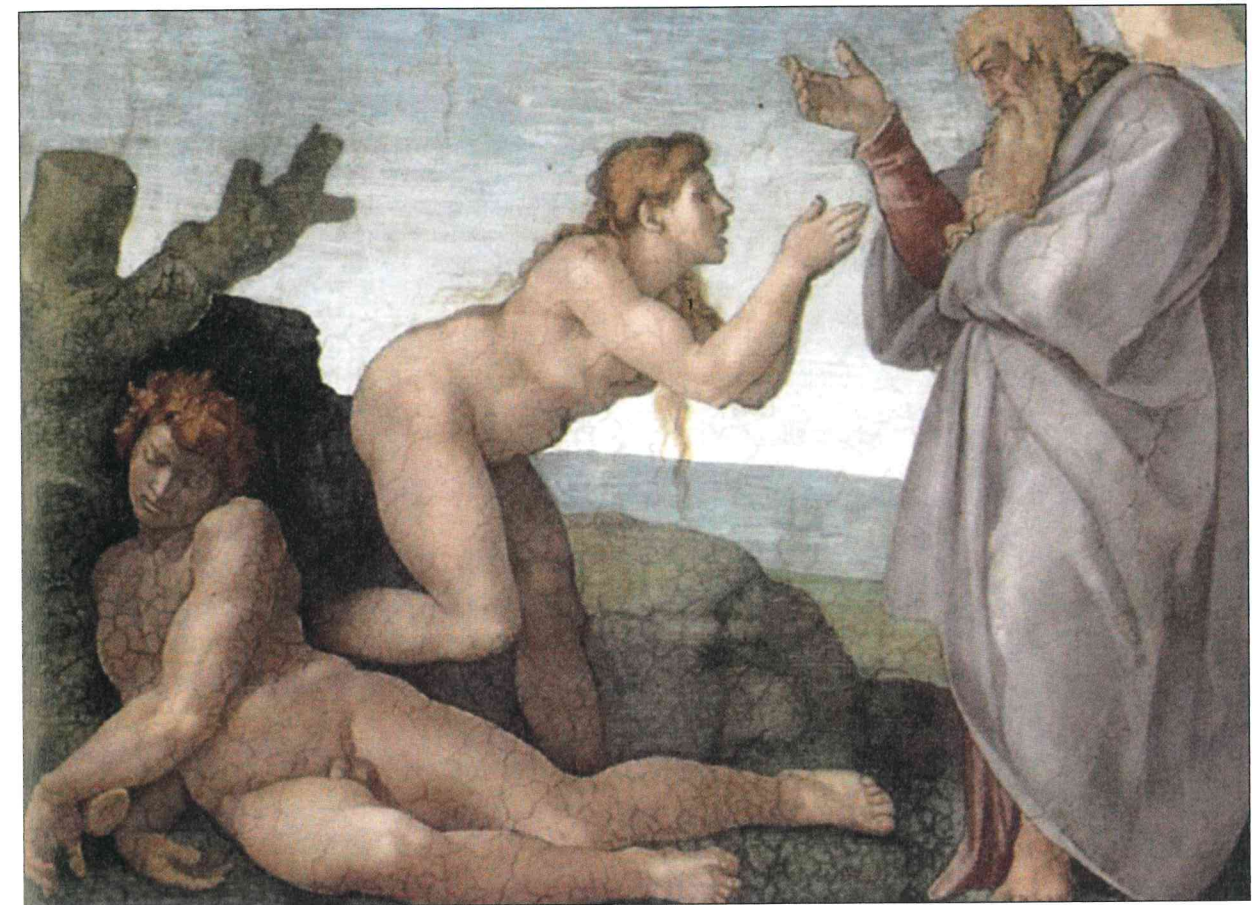
Fourth Day: THE RULERS OF TIME

And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.



Fifth Day: THE RULERS OF SPACE

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.



Sixth Day: THE RULERS OF LIFE

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

Man is made to live in communion with God in whom he finds happiness: "When I am completely united to you, there will be no more sorrow or trials; entirely full of you, my life will be complete" (St. Augustine, *Confessions* 10, 28, 39: PL 32, 795). (CCC 45)

Day 7: God Rested

Seventh Day: THE SABBATH COVENANT WITH CREATION

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

Creation: A Covenant With The Universe

So what is the real purpose of the creation story? We can see some of the most important ideas in just a few phrases. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." We see how God creates, by the power of his Word. He simply speaks the world into being. That same Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. In the New Testament, we discover that the Word is not some impersonal utterance; it is the Son of God, our Savior. "The earth was without form and void." There was no structure on earth, and no one to live there. One way of looking at the creation account is to see it as two sets of three days. In the first three days, God creates the place, the structure of the earth. In the second three days, God creates the inhabitants to fill it. In other words, God first creates forms and then fills them with inhabitants.

- On the first day, God creates day and night.
- On the second day, God creates the sky and the sea.
- On the third day, God creates the land and the vegetation.

These first three days see the creation of the environments in which God's creatures will live.

Day and Night (Time)	Sky and Sea (Space)	Land and Vegetation (Life)
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In those first three days, God has created a world fit to live in. He has provided the threefold form of earthly life. Day and night give us time; sky and sea give us space; land and vegetation give us a place to live.

The next three days correspond to the first three.

- On the fourth day, God creates the sun to rule the day, and the moon and stars to shine at night.
- On the fifth day, God creates the birds and the fish to fill up the sky and the sea.
- On the sixth day, God creates the beasts of the field, and finally human beings, to live on the land with its vegetation.

These next three days, in other words, see the creation of the *rulers* of the environments created in the first three days.

Sun and Moon rule over	Birds and Fish rule over	Humans and Animals rule over
Day and Night	Sky and Sea	Land and Vegetation

So on the first three days, God establishes a form. On the second three days, God creates the inhabitants for each of the realms he created in the first three days.

Finally, on the seventh day, God rests. The Hebrew word that means "to swear a covenant" is based on the Hebrew word for seven. Someone who said "I swear a covenant" in Hebrew was literally saying "I seven myself."

So in creating the world in seven days, God is swearing a *covenant* with the universe. He is not just the master, and we are not just slaves. He is more than creator, and we are more than his creatures. If God had stopped on the sixth day, we would be only creatures: we would be slaves and private property of God. But God went on. "So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation." God invited us into that rest, because that rest represents the covenant relationship that he establishes with his creation.

The Sabbath rest crowns creation as a roof crowns a temple:

SABBATH COVENANT WITH CREATION		
Sun and Moon <i>rule over</i>	Birds and Fish <i>rule over</i>	Humans and Animals <i>rule over</i>
Day and Night	Sky and Sea	Land and Vegetation

All of creation is a great temple for the worship of God the creator.

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 (cf. Gn 15: 5; Jer 33: 19-26). And so, the truth of creation is also expressed with growing vigor in the message of the prophets, the prayer of the psalms and the liturgy, and in the wisdom sayings of the Chosen People (cf. Is 44: 24; Ps 104; Prv 8: 22-31). (CCC 288)

Understanding Time As Part Of Creation

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." What was God doing before he created? It's a hard question. St. Augustine had a simple answer:

"Nothing. He didn't have the time."

What St. Augustine meant was that time and space are things that exist for creatures, but not for the Creator. God fills all of time.

We speak of God as "omnipresent," which means that he is everywhere. And that, in turn, means that God cannot move. Why not? Because in order to move, God would have to go from someplace where he is to some other place where he is not. But there is no place where he is not. God is not stuck in one place; rather, God fills space to overflowing. Space cannot contain the infinite glory of God. We can move, because most of the universe is made up of places where we are not. But God cannot move.

The same thing is true for time. Time is an experience of limited creatures like us. We move forward in time, as we see it, because most of time is made up of moments that for us either have already passed or have not come yet. But God fills all of time. Just as God cannot move anywhere in the universe because he is everywhere to begin with, so for God, the past, the present, and the future are one simultaneous moment, one eternal present.

Creation Is Good

Some people—even some who call themselves Christians—believe that matter is evil and only spirit is good. The soul, they say, is good, but the body is only a necessary evil we need to get through this world.

The first chapter of Genesis contradicts that idea. Every time God creates something, the creation story tells us that "God saw that it was good." And in the end, "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."

Matter as well as spirit, body as well as soul—both are positive goods that are created by God for good. They are ultimately the instruments God uses to redeem us.

If we sin with our bodies, God turns around and uses Christ's body to redeem us and to restore us to a relationship with himself. In fact, the goodness of matter is one of the foundations of the seven sacraments, all of which make use of material things for spiritual ends.

Is It True?

Is it literally true that God made the world in six days?

Many Christians think that six days means six "days" as we know days today. Other people say the creation story is just a myth, a made-up fable that isn't true at all.

The Catholic Church has always taught that everything in the Bible is true; so the creation story must be true. Some Christians believe that "six days" means six literal days. Most Catholic interpreters, however, do not take that view.

Hebrew history was not written the same way we write history today. Modern historians write down a series of events—battles, plagues, elections—just as they happened, from start to finish. Scripture, on the other hand, gives us *religious* history. The sacred writers use different literary forms, with many symbols and figures. The important thing for them was not merely to give us an accurate knowledge of historical events, but to tell us the truth about our relationship with God. In the creation story, they were not trying to tell us *how* creation was done. They had no interest in the exact physical forces and mechanics that went into creation. Instead, Genesis 1 is primarily meant to show us *why* God created.

The same is true of the rest of the story of human beginnings.

The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man. Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1513; Pius XII: DS 3897; Paul VI: AAS 58 (1966)). (CCC 390)



"If there was time, You made it, for time could not pass before You made time..."

"If there was not any time, there was not any 'then.'"

(St. Augustine, Confessions, XI, 12-13)

The Creation Of Human Beings In The Image Of God

As the very last act of creation, God creates human beings.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

What does it mean to say that we were created in God's image and after his likeness?

1. **God is our Father.** The next time Genesis uses the terms "image" and "likeness" together, it's speaking of Adam becoming the father of Seth: "When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth" (Genesis 5:3). We were created with the ability to have a loving relationship with God, our father. We were given "the inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman" (CCC 376) from the moment our existence began.
2. **We are like God.** We have intelligence, free will, and the capacity to love. Furthermore, God made our nature unlike any other. As human beings, we find ourselves somewhere between the angels and the beasts, with physical bodies and rational souls. Our love in our families is an image of the love and life of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. **Human life possesses great sacredness.** Too often, we make the mistake of valuing people according to what they can do for society. The Nazis made that mistake, and it is at the heart of the tragedy of abortion and euthanasia in our own time. Old or young, healthy or sick, every person is sacred because every person is created in God's image. Even someone who has committed a horrible crime is still created in the image of God. No human is beyond redemption.
4. **Our work has special value.** Our dignity does not come from what we do. Our work has dignity because we bear the image of God. *Work itself is not a curse*, even though it is cursed with toil because of Adam's sin, as we'll see shortly. God himself labored to bring creation into existence. We are called to work in imitation of God our Father.

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead. (CCC 357)

Adam and Eve were created in original justice. They were full of sanctifying grace and had dominion over their passions and over the earth. They had perfection of mind and will coupled with freedom from death and sickness. They were immortal.

The Marriage Covenant

Not only did God create us in his image, but he also created us *male and female*.

And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."



"Be fruitful and multiply" means more than just to reproduce. God created man and woman as equal but complementary persons, meant to join in a family relationship sealed by the marital covenant. Marriage is not man-made. Marriage is divinely instituted the very moment man was created male and female.

In Matthew 19, when the Pharisees probed and questioned Jesus about divorce, he went right back to Genesis. There he set straight and made clear the doctrine of marital indissolubility: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." God is the one who creates marriage. Mere humans cannot break it up. Marriage was created to be permanent, lifelong, and indissoluble. More than that, it was created to be *fruitful*.

We are, in a sense, co-creators with God in the act of marriage. Marital love in the covenant of marriage is life-giving, not just accidentally or incidentally, but intrinsically. That is the divine intention, for the two to become one—and then three and four and five....

God is a family, an infinite family of three persons. God created the human family in his own image and likeness. How can finite beings be an image of an infinite family? By becoming three, four, five, a million, ten million, twenty million, thirty million, and so on. We are called to be fruitful and multiply in the image of God, not just biologically but psychologically and socially in love and virtue.

Man and woman have been *created*, which is to say, *willed* by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. “Being man” or “being woman” is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator (cf. Gn 2: 7, 22). Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity “in the image of God.” In their “being-man” and “being-woman,” they reflect the Creator’s wisdom and goodness. (CCC 369)



God Our Father

Among all the Scriptural texts about creation, the first three chapters of Genesis occupy a unique place. From a literary standpoint these texts may have had diverse sources. 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. (CCC 289)

We have seen in the first chapter of Genesis that all the universe was created as a temple. But if it is a temple, where is the holy place? Where is the priest? The second chapter of Genesis answers those questions.

The first chapter of Genesis in Hebrew speaks of God as Elohim, God the creator. Now the story begins to call God Yahweh, God the Covenant Lord. In many Bible translations, including the one used in this book, the sacred name Yahweh is translated as “LORD,” in small capitals.

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not yet caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a

mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground—then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Gn 2: 4-9)

Genesis 1 describes how *Elohim* called the universe into existence; now Genesis 2 tells us how *Yahweh* acted closely and personally, forming Adam out of the ground and placing him in the Garden of Eden. The difference in names reflects a difference in how the author looks at what God is doing. “*Elohim*” suggests the infinite power of the Creator, while “*Yahweh*” suggests God’s covenant love—the love of the Father for us, his children.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

Here God gives Adam his instructions. He is to till the garden (even in paradise there was work!) and to “keep” it—the word literally means to “guard” it, as though Adam might have to defend it from intruders. In fact, Adam will be a priest—the Hebrew words for “till” and “keep” are the same words the priests of God would later use to describe their duties. In the Garden of Eden, God has created a holy place where he meets his priest, Adam, face to face.

But his role as priest was about to be put to the test.

Adam could eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, including the tree of life. There was only one exception: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

Now the story goes on to tell how God brings every creature to Adam, and Adam names each one of them. By bringing him the animals one by one, God shows Adam that he is *different* from the animals. “But for the man there was not found a helper fit for him.”

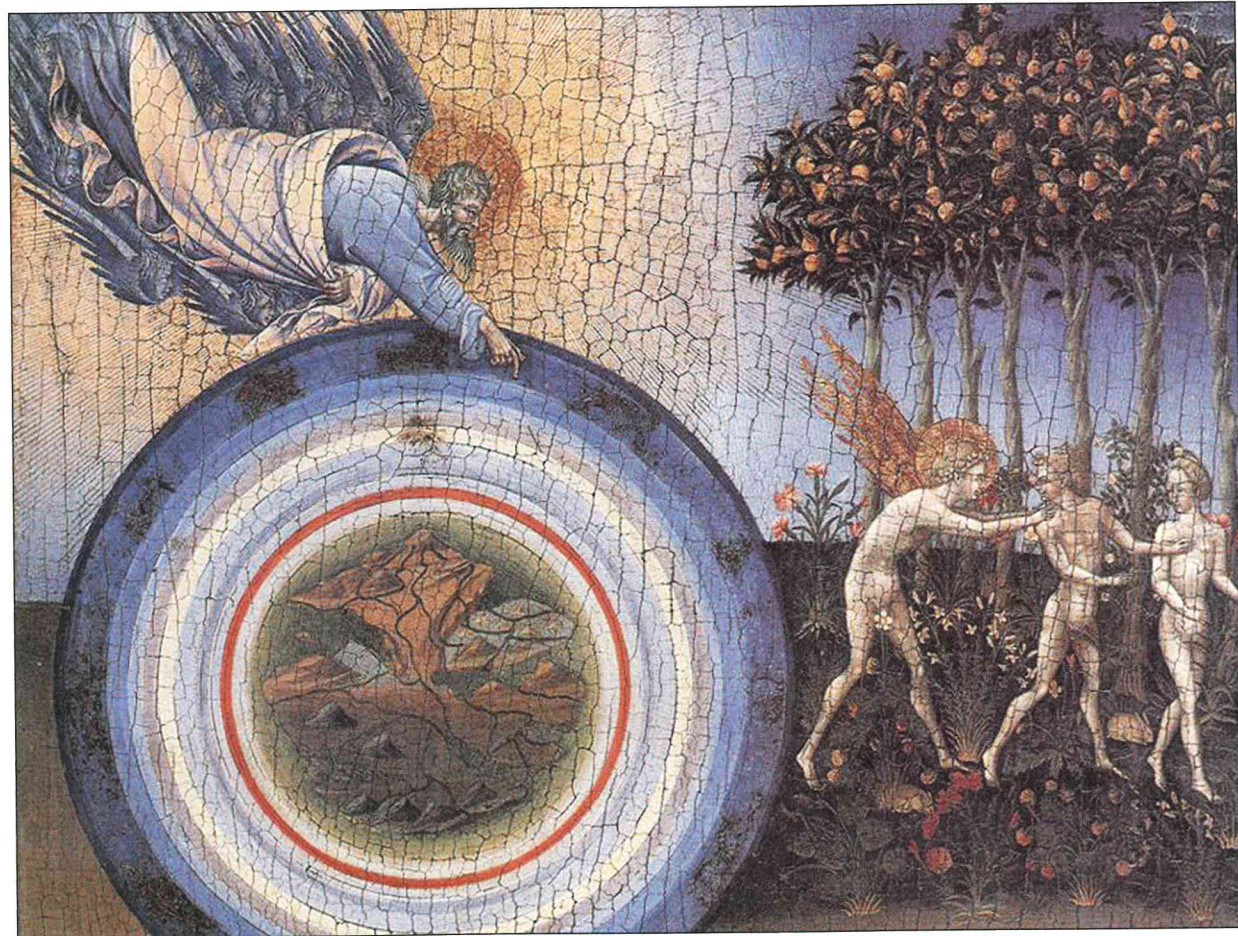
So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man; and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Man and woman were made “for each other”—not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be “help-mate” to the other, for they are equal as persons (“bone of my bones...”) and complementary as masculine and feminine. In marriage God unites them in such a way that, by forming “one flesh” (Gn 2: 24), they can transmit human life: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gn 1: 28). By transmitting human life to their descendants, man and woman as spouses and parents cooperate in a unique way in the Creator’s work (cf. GS 50 § 1). (CCC 372)





The Fall

Genesis 3 starts with an ominous new character:

Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate.

So Adam and Eve both disobeyed God. Why?

The Hebrew word used to describe the "serpent," *nahash*, implies something much more deadly than a garden-variety snake. It is used throughout the Old Testament in reference to powerful evil creatures.

- Numbers 21 uses the term to describe "fiery serpents" that attack the Israelites in the desert.
- In Isaiah 27:1 the term is depicting the great mythical dragon, the Leviathan.
- Job 26:13 uses *nahash* in reference to the great sea monsters.

Wherever it appears, the word usually refers to something that bites, often with venom. The serpent here is more than just subtle: it is deadly, a liar, and a murderer.

Scripture witnesses to the disastrous influence of the one Jesus calls "a murderer from the beginning," who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from his Father (Jn 8:44; cf. Mt 4:1-11). "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8). In its consequences the gravest of these works was the mendacious seduction that led man to disobey God. (CCC 394)

Spiritual Death

God said "the day you eat of the tree [of knowledge] you shall die." The serpent said, "You will not die." Who was right?

On the surface it appears that the serpent was right. After all, Adam and Eve did not fall dead after they ate the fruit—they ran and hid. In every lie, there is an element of truth. The truth in Satan's lie was this: you will not die a physical death once you eat the fruit.

Adam and Eve lost something greater than natural life when they sinned; they lost supernatural life, original holiness, and original justice. Losing this life is true death—a death much worse than any they would have experienced had they simply lost their bodily lives. Confronted with the choice of preserving their earthly lives on the one hand or surrendering the supernatural life in their souls on the other, Adam and Eve chose to love themselves more than God.

Following St. Paul, the Church has always taught that the overwhelming misery which oppresses men and their inclination towards evil and death cannot be understood apart from their connection with Adam's sin and the fact that he has transmitted to us a sin with which we are all born afflicted, a sin which is the "death of the soul" (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1512). Because of this certainty of faith, the Church baptizes for the remission of sins even tiny infants who have not committed personal sin (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1514). (CCC 403)

Here it is helpful to recall Jesus' words, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt 10:28).

This dramatic situation of "the whole world [which] is in the power of the evil one" (1 Jn 5:19; cf. 1 Pt 5:8) makes man's life a battle:

The whole of man's history has been the story of dour combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield man has to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to himself, and aided by God's grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity.¹ (CCC 409)

Everything the serpent had said was right—but in a twisted way. Adam and Eve didn't die *physically* when they ate the fruit—but they died spiritually. In the "dour combat," they had lost the battle. And their eyes were opened—but to the shame of their own nakedness and sin. They knew that they had sinned against God. And like every disobedient child, they ran and hid from their Father.



“Where Are You?”

When Adam and Eve hear God coming they hide themselves. God asks a series of puzzling questions.

“Where are you?” (Gn 3:8).

“Who told you that you were naked?” (Gn 3:11).

“Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (Gn 3:11).

“What is this that you have done?” (Gn 3:13).

Why would God, all-powerful and all-knowing, ask such questions? Doesn't he know the answers? Of course he does. God is giving Adam and Eve every chance to come to him and confess their sin. Instead they hide and make excuses for disobeying God.

Adam begins by blaming his wife. But he also blames God himself. “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate” (Gn 3:12). Eve turns around and blames the serpent for tricking her into eating the fruit: “The serpent beguiled me, and I ate” (Gn 3:13).

The First Gospel

God then curses the serpent, adding a promise to send one who will conquer the serpent. “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gn 3:15). The serpent will wound the Redeemer, but not seriously, biting His *heel*. The Redeemer will issue the final blow to the serpent, bruising his head.

Early Christian writers called this the “First Gospel” (*Protoevangelium*). Furthermore, they saw the term the “seed of the woman” as God's promise of a future Redeemer:

The Christian tradition sees in this passage an announcement of the “New Adam” who, because he “became obedient unto death, even death on a cross,” makes amends superabundantly for the disobedience of Adam (cf. 1 Cor 15: 21-22, 45; Phil 2: 8; Rom 5: 19-20). Furthermore, many Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the *Protoevangelium* as Mary, the mother of Christ, the “new Eve.” Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ's victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life (cf. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*: DS 2803; Council of Trent: DS 1573). (CCC 411)

The Curse

By their sin, Adam and Eve brought suffering into the world. Sin is the reason for suffering. All the good things God planned for us will now be tainted by suffering. Because of their sin, God warns Adam and Eve that:

- When we carry out God's wish for us to “be fruitful,” childbirth will be painful.
- Our family life will still be an image of God's love, but relationships will be marred by sin.
- Work—which was designed to be a joy—will be toil; it will not always be fruitful, but may bring forth thorns and thistles. Labor will be carried out with difficulty, in sweat.
- Even life itself will end in suffering. Physical death is inevitable.

How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam “as one body of one man” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo* 4, 1). By this “unity of the human race” all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do

know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a *personal sin*, but this sin affected the *human nature* that they would then transmit *in a fallen state* (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1511-1512). It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called “sin” only in an analogical sense: it is a sin “contracted” and not “committed”—a state and not an act. (CCC 404)



This is the curse Adam and Eve brought on themselves—and on all of us—by their¹ sin. That curse was not, however, an act of revenge. God's wrath is not the *opposite* of God's love: rather, his wrath is a *manifestation* of his love.

When we disobey the Father's law, we refuse his love. But we cannot escape it; we simply seal ourselves off from it so that we cannot enjoy it. We only feel burned by it until we open ourselves to it again. That opening up is *repentance*, and God's wrath is meant to lead us to repentance.

Repentance thus involves a *change of thinking and living*. We do not see suffering as evil in itself any longer. By seeing it as part of God's plan to teach us love, we can embrace suffering as a needed remedy for sin.

Instead of being God's revenge on Adam and Eve, the curse was the *cure* for their illness.

Evil

Once evil had entered the world, it took firm root. Adam and Eve, thrown out of paradise, had two sons, Cain and Abel. And the very next thing we read is the story of how Cain killed Abel. Evil had entered the world to stay.

Why did Cain kill Abel? Cain was angry because Abel's sacrifice had been acceptable to God, but his own had not. Why not? It was because of Cain's own attitude. Sacrifice was no good if it didn't go along with a right mind.

The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door: its desire is for you, but you must master it.” (Gn 4: 6-7)

Cain's sacrifice was unacceptable because he had not mastered sin. His sin was envy—one of the traditional seven deadly sins, and one of the most dangerous. Envy is the sin of resenting the blessings of others: “It's not fair,” says the envious person. Cain saw himself as persecuted: God wasn't being fair to him. Even after God confronted him with his sin, he moaned that “my punishment is more than I can bear.” Yet God would not abandon Cain to total destruction. He would be punished by being made a wanderer, but God would protect Cain also.

The doctrine of original sin, closely connected with that of redemption by Christ, provides lucid discernment of man's situation and activity in the world. By our first parents' sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free. Original sin entails “captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Council of Trent (1546): DS 1511; cf. Heb 2: 14). Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action (cf. John Paul II, CA 25), and morals. (CCC 407)

Creation And Evolution

The first thing the Bible tells us is that God created the heavens and the earth, so Christians believe that God created the whole universe. In addition to this, here are important truths of faith found in Genesis which the Church requires us to accept. Some of these are:

- That matter was created out of nothing by God at the beginning of time.
- That the creation of human beings—however humans arose in history—was an act of special creation by God. God breathed a human soul into Adam.
- That woman is formed from the body of man, from his very self.
- That all humanity is descended from Adam and Eve.
- That Adam and Eve were created without sin.
- That Adam and Eve were commanded to be obedient to God.
- That Adam and Eve sinned against this command.
- That, as a result of that sin, our ancestors fell from their state of sinless innocence.
- That, even at the time of the Fall, God made clear the promise of a future Redeemer.

The creation account in the Bible tells us God is the origin of the material which makes up the universe.

Evolutionists attempt to explain, scientifically, how man and animals came to be by an examination of the material universe, and the Church does not oppose research and discussions on the part of men of experience in science and sacred theology in regards to evolution insofar as it relates to the origin of the human body coming from pre-existent material.

However, when a statement of evolution appears to conflict with the Bible, the Church will indicate the truth Catholics must believe.

When the theory of evolution opened the door to the possibility of polygenism—the belief there were many sets of first parents on the earth—this was a contradiction of a truth contained in the Bible.

To counter this and other false beliefs, Pope Pius XII wrote the encyclical *Humani generis* in 1950 to counter false opinions concerning Catholic Doctrine. In the encyclical he states, “the faithful cannot embrace that opinion which maintains either after Adam there existed on the earth true men who did not take their origin through natural generation from him as from the first parent of all or that Adam represents a certain number of first parents.”

To accept polygenism would have led directly to the denial of original sin.



An initial in Genesis from the *Neapolitan Luxury Bible*, 1360, Naples; a lavishly illustrated Latin text of the Vulgate.



The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of man. These discoveries invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator, prompting us to give him thanks for all his works and for the understanding and wisdom he gives to scholars and researchers. With Solomon they can say: “It is he who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements... for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me” (Wis 7: 17-22). (CCC 283)

The great interest accorded to these studies is strongly stimulated by a question of another order, which goes beyond the proper domain of the natural sciences. It is not only a question of knowing when and how the universe arose physically, or when man appeared, but rather of discovering the meaning of such an origin: is the universe governed by chance, blind fate, anonymous necessity, or by a transcendent, intelligent, and good Being called “God”? And if the world does come from God’s wisdom and goodness, why is there evil? Where does it come from? Who is responsible for it? Is there any liberation from it? (CCC 284)

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**John Paul II,
Mulieris Dignitatem, III: 7**

By reflecting on the whole account found in Genesis 2:18-25, and by interpreting it in light of the truth about the image and likeness of God (cf. Gn 1:26-27), we can *understand even more fully what constitutes the personal character* of the human being, thanks to which both man and woman are like God. For every individual is made in the image of God, insofar as he or she is a rational and free creature capable of knowing God and loving him. Moreover, we read that man cannot exist “alone” (cf. Gn 2:18); he can exist only as a “unity of the two,” and therefore *in relation to another human person*. It is a question here of a mutual relationship: man to woman and woman to man. Being a person in the image and likeness of God thus also involves existing in a relationship, in relation to the other “I.” This is a prelude to the definitive self-revelation of the Triune God: a living unity in the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

At the beginning of the Bible this is not yet stated directly. The whole Old Testament is mainly concerned with revealing the truth about the oneness and unity of God. Within this fundamental truth about God the New Testament will reveal the inscrutable mystery of God’s inner life. *God*, who allows himself to be known by human beings through Christ, is the *unity of the Trinity*: unity in communion. In this way new light is also thrown on man’s image and likeness to God, spoken of in the Book of Genesis. The fact that man “created as man and woman” is the image of God means not only that each of them individually is like God, as a rational and free being. It also means that man and woman, created as a “unity of

the two” in their common humanity, are called to live in a communion of love, and in this way to mirror in the world the communion of love that is in God, through which the Three Persons love each other in the intimate mystery of the one divine life. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God through the unity of the divinity, exist as persons through the inscrutable divine relationship. Only in this way can we understand the truth that God in himself is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:16).

The image and likeness of God in man, created as man and woman (in the analogy that can be presumed between Creator and creature), thus also expresses the “unity of the two” in a common humanity. This “unity of the two,” which is a sign of interpersonal communion, *shows that the creation of man* is also marked by a certain likeness to the divine communion (“*communio*”).



The prologue page to Genesis from a Parisian “Pocket Bible,” mid-13th century; a handy type of Bible which was so popular that hundreds were produced and distributed by booksellers instead of monastic scriptoria, thus playing a central role in promulgating this version of the Bible which included the Prayer of Manasseh.

VOCABULARY

ADAM

The first man and our first father. He committed the first sin. The name “Adam” was also used in Hebrew to refer to humanity in general.

CREATION

The act by which God brought the universe and all its inhabitants into being out of nothing. The universe that God created. Creation is good, yet has been corrupted by sin. The scientific theory that species were created as they are.

DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

Christian men and women whose teachings are especially valuable.

EDEN

The name of the garden in which God placed Adam and Eve.

ELOHIM

The Hebrew word for God as Creator.

EVE

The first woman and our first mother. She committed the first sin. Eve was created from the rib of Adam, and thus woman—unlike the animals—is man’s equal and complement.

EVOLUTION

The scientific theory that species came to be as they are by a gradual process of change and development. God created all matter, and the creation of human beings is a special act of creation.

FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

The great theologians of the early Church after the apostles. The Patristic age, named for these Fathers (“*patri*” in Latin), lasted until about the seventh century.

IMAGE

A likeness or picture. Each person is made in the image of God; that is, like God insofar as having intelligence, free will, and the capacity to love.

PROTOEVANGELIUM (Protoevangelion)

The announcement of a future Redeemer to Adam and Eve after their Fall. Greek for “first Gospel.”

SABBATH

The day of rest in imitation of God resting on the seventh day of creation. The Sabbath is sacred, a sign of God’s covenant with creation.

SERPENT

The form taken by Satan in the Garden of Eden. The Hebrew word refers to a fearsome, murderous creature.

VOID

Empty. Without form. The state of the world before God gave it form and created beings to fill it.

YAHWEH

God’s personal Name, often translated as “LORD” in English. Scripture often uses it to emphasize God’s personal, covenantal relationship with people.



God separates the day from the night. Detail from the *Utrecht Luxury Bible*, 1430, Netherlands. Illuminated manuscripts from Utrecht were so coveted that artists from other countries demanded an import ban on them.