

## Lesson 2: Creation and Our Responsibility to Care for It



### Creation

The universe was created by God who passionately desires to share His life, love, truth, goodness, and beauty with humanity. All that we see and experience in the created world is an expression of God's great love for us. We recognize Him in the beauty, wonder, and harmony that surrounds us in the natural world and acknowledge Him as the cause and end of everything.

The story of Creation tells us that God made us in His likeness and gave us dominion over the earth and all the creatures on it. How comforting it is to know that when God looked at everything He had made, He found that it was very good. Believing that God created us body and soul in His image and finds us good makes it easier for us to accept the idea that God loves us and that we should love ourselves and others.

God alone, who is beyond time and space, created the world out of nothing and called all things into being. Everything that exists depends on God and continues in being only because God wills it to be. The creation of the world is a "community project" of our Trinitarian God. The Father is the Creator. The Son is the meaning and heart of the world since "All things were created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16). The Holy Spirit holds everything together since He is the One that gives life.

There are two Creation accounts in the Bible. They are different from each another. A lot of people like to find fault with the Bible because of the contradictions that sometimes present themselves. However, contradictions in the Scriptures are not meant to create

disbelief and/or confusion. On the contrary, contradictions present us with the opportunity to view an event from a different perspective. This allows us to get a fuller picture of our faith. With this information, let us look at the two Creation accounts.

**Read the First Account of Creation:                   Genesis 1:1-2:3**

**Read the Second Account of Creation:           Genesis 2:4-3:24**

As you can see from reading the Creation accounts, God created the earth from what was disorder and chaos. We learn how God created the universe and all things in it. We experience the wonder and beauty of God's creation when we take time to truly look at the world. By thinking about the world and its beauty and order, we can come to realize that we are part of an order beyond ourselves. We can come to know God in two ways: from outside and from inside. We can see God's work in the visible world around us and we can also look inside ourselves and realize that we are incomplete and part of a larger plan. The sentence, "God saw how good it was," shows God's love for His creation. It also illustrates the value and dignity of work in God's eyes. Like God's work of creation, our work and efforts are valuable and important for us, the world, and God.

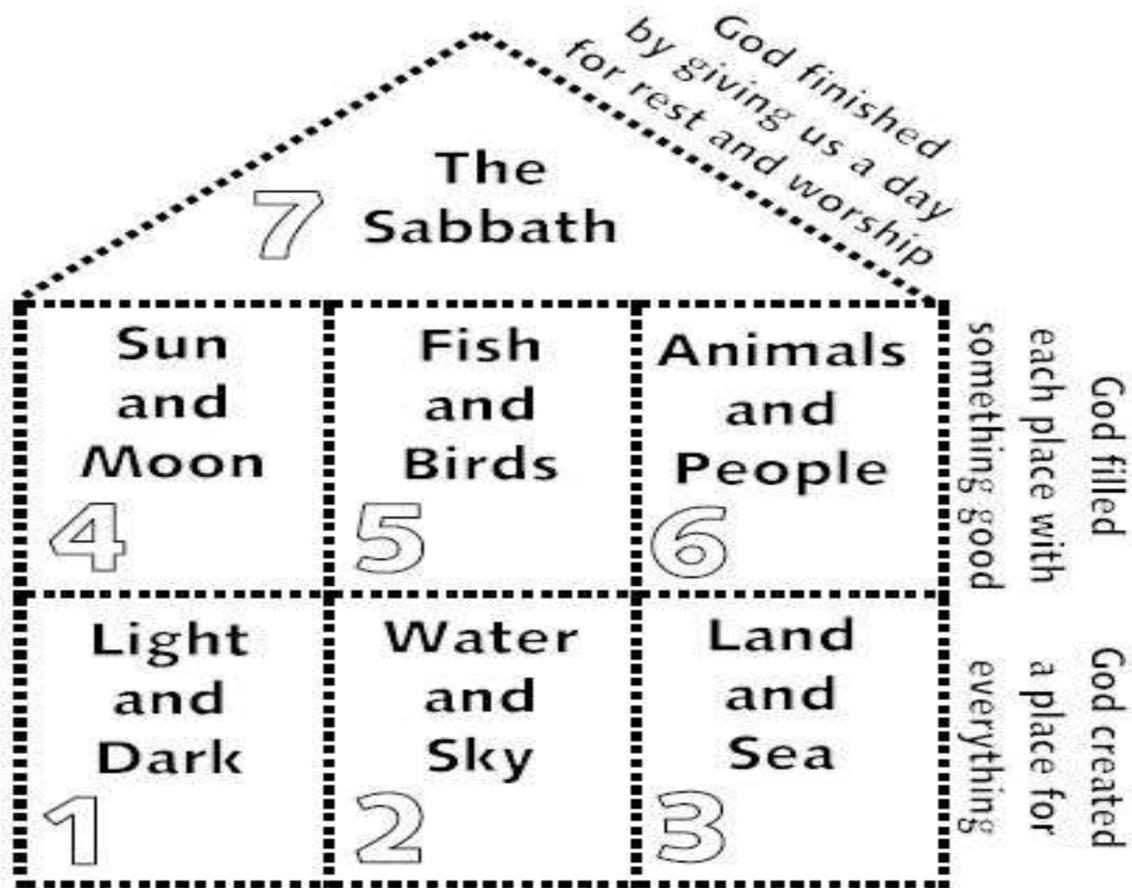
In the First Account of Creation, creation is depicted as "the work of six days" with the seventh day used for "rest." The symbol of the work week, which is crowned by a day of rest, is an expression of how good, beautiful, and wisely ordered creation is. From the symbolism of "the work of six days" we can derive the following principles:

- 1) Nothing exists that was not called into being by the Creator.
- 2) Everything that exists is good in its own way.
- 3) Something that has become bad still has a good core.
- 4) Created beings and things are interrelated and interdependent.
- 5) Creation in its order and harmony reflects the surpassing goodness and beauty of God.
- 6) In creation there is an order of complexity: man is superior to an animal, an animal is superior to a plant, a plant is superior to inanimate matter.
- 7) Creation is heading for the great celebration when Christ will bring the world home and God will be everything to everyone.

Why did God rest on the seventh day? God's rest from His work points toward the completion of creation, which is beyond all human efforts. Although man in his work is the junior partner of his Creator, he can by no means redeem the world by his toil. The goal of creation is "a new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17) through a redemption that is given to us as a gift. Thus the Sunday rest, which is a foretaste of heavenly rest, is superior to the work that prepares us for it.

The following illustration shows how the seven days of creation form a house for God's people. The first three days, God created realms or places; whereas days 4 through 6, God created rulers for those realms. This shows how the world is a reflection of God's house.

# God Created a Beautiful Home for Us!



Why did God create the world? The world was made for the glory of God. There is no other reason for creation than love. In it God's glory and honor appears. To praise God does not mean applauding the Creator. After all, man is not a spectator to the work of creation. For man, "praising" God means being grateful for his own existence together with all creation. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons said, "The glory of God is man fully alive; moreover, man's life is the vision of God."

## **Our Responsibility to Care for Creation**

Because human beings are the height of God's creation, we have a responsibility to care for all of God's works. We also have a responsibility to work toward making a more just world by respecting and loving others. Care for God's Creation involves Good Stewardship. The goods of the earth are gifts from God, and they are intended by God

for the benefit of everyone; therefore it is our duty to use the fruits of creation wisely. The Catholic Church must address economic and social matters that relate to the basic rights of people and communities in this ever-changing world. The Church's Catholic Social Teaching helps us find direction on how to care for all of God's creation and how to thank God actively for His abundant gifts.

**Catholic Social Teaching** is the Church's teaching about the ordering of life in society and about the attainment of individual and social justice. There are four central principles contained in Catholic Social Teaching: Personhood, Solidarity, the Common Good, and Subsidiarity.

**Personhood** refers to the life and dignity of each human being, especially in light of them as children of God. We are called to recognize the Dignity of the Human Person. All human life is sacred: this is the starting point for moral teaching. Human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency – food, shelter and clothing, employment, health care, and education.



The principle of **Solidarity** states that we are all a part of God's family because we are all children of God. Hence, we are one human family regardless of our nationality, race, gender, age, religion, or sexually. At its heart, solidarity is the attitude of strength and unity that leads to the sharing of spiritual and material goods. Solidarity unites rich and poor, weak and strong, to foster a society in which all give what they can and receive what they need. The idea of solidarity is based on the common origin of all humanity. Solidarity aims at strengthening community and promoting a "civilization of love" (*Saint Pope John Paul II*). At the core of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. In short, solidarity is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; it is a desire for complete oneness with others.

The **Common Good** is the principle that all human beings can live in society with freedom, peace, and security. In other words, the common good is the good that is shared

by all in common. The common good must be the business of everyone. The common good is best served where the good of the individual person and of the smaller units of society (*such as the family*) are central. When it comes to the common good, we realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others. The common good is not the good for the greatest number of people (*that would leave out some people*); rather, every person must participate in the common good. Following the principles of the common good means that people have the right to develop their talents and skills to become the best individuals they can be. The political, social, economic, and cultural environment must produce conditions that enable everyone to do this. The principles of the common good are best dealt with at the local level by the people most directly involved with the social issues.

The principle of **Subsidiarity** states: What individuals can accomplish by their own initiative and efforts should not be taken from them by a higher authority (*such as government*). Subsidiarity is the principle that the best institutions for responding to a particular social task or need are those closest to it. The responsibility of the closest political or private institution is to assist those in need. Only when issues cannot be resolved at the local level should they be resolved at a higher level. The government has a special role and responsibility to its citizens. The government is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good. All people have a right and a responsibility to participate in political institutions so that government can achieve its proper goals.

## Social Justice

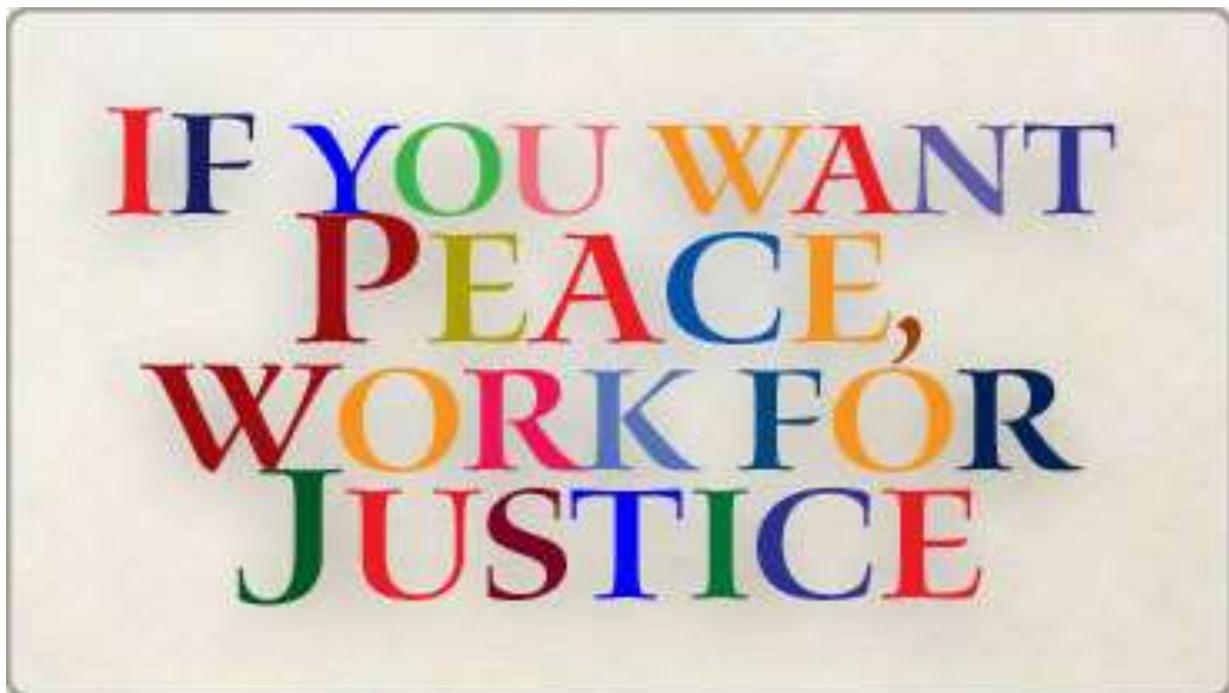
Social Justice is a major part of the Catholic Social Teaching. It is through Social Justice that we are fully able to understand and respect the dignity of man, the crown of God's creation. **Social Justice** is the fair and equal treatment of every member of society. It is required by the dignity and freedom of every person. The Catholic Church has developed a body of social principles and moral teachings described in papal and other official documents. This teaching deals with the economic, political, and social order of the world. Social Justice is rooted in the Bible and in the traditional theological teachings of the Catholic Church. Social Justice is designed to eradicate **Social Sin**, which is social situations and/or institutions that are against the will of God. Because of the personal sins of individuals, entire societies can develop structures that are sinful in and of themselves. Social sins include racism, sexism, structures that deny people access to adequate health care, and the destruction of environment for the benefit of a few individuals.

Families are often at the center of social justice issues. All human life is sacred and all people must be respected and valued over material goods. We are called to ask whether our actions as a society respect or threaten the life and dignity of both the human person and the family. Participation in family and community is central to our faith and to a healthy society. Families must be supported so that people can participate in society,

build a community spirit, and promote the well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Every person has a right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. As Catholics, we have a responsibility to protect these basic human rights in order to achieve a healthy society. Therefore, we are called to help the poor and needy. The **Preferential Option for the Poor** states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community. Thus, the true moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. In our world, many people are very rich, while at the same time, many are extremely poor. As a part of God's universal family, we are called to pay special attention to the needs of the poor by defending and promoting their dignity and by meeting their immediate material needs.

Part of Social Justice is **Economic Justice**; this guides the relationship between the people and the nation's economy. The economy must serve the people. All workers have a right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, and to safe working conditions. They also have a fundamental right to organize and join unions. People have a right to economic initiative and private property, but these rights have limits. No one is allowed to amass excessive wealth when others lack the basic necessities of life. All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community. We are called to seek Global Solidarity and Development since we are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic and ideological differences. Therefore, we are called to work globally for justice.



## Respect Life Issues

Respect Life is a part of Social Justice and caring for God's Creation because life is God's gift to us. Life is sacred because it comes from God. Since life begins at the moment of conception, we are called to protect and respect life from the womb to the tomb. There are certain issues in society that threaten the dignity of life at both the initial and final stages that the Church fights in order for humanity to respect the dignity and life of all.

At the center of all Catholic social teaching is the transcendence of God and the dignity of the human person. The human person is the clearest reflection of God's presence in the world; all of the Church's work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God's creative work and the meaning of Christ's redemptive ministry.

The issues that directly oppose a true respect for life in its earliest stages are: contraception, abortion, artificial insemination, In Vitro Fertilization (*or Embryo Transfer*), sperm or egg donors, and human cloning. The two major issues that directly oppose life in its final stages are: capital punishment (*the death penalty*) and Euthanasia (*Mercy Killing*). All of these issues directly oppose the teachings of the Catholic Church because they disregard the value of human life.

Five other topics that directly oppose life at all stages are: discrimination, racism, bullying, poverty, and war.

**Discrimination** based on sex, race, ethnicity, or age continues to exist and can never be justified. Such discrimination constitutes a grave injustice and an affront to human dignity. It must be aggressively resisted by every individual and rooted out of every social institution and structure.

**Racism** is a particularly serious form of discrimination. Racism is not merely one sin among many; it is a radical evil dividing the human family.

**Bullying** is a direct attack against the dignity of a person as a child of God. Catholics are called to protect the dignity of the human person without exception. We must recognize that bullying is an attack on human dignity and, therefore, we must stand in solidarity with the victims of bullying so as to call for its end.

**Poverty** is an issue that assaults the dignity of the human person because it denies the individual of material items needed to maintain a healthy life: shelter, clothing, food, water, and monetary resources. The poor and needy must be a primary focus in our faithful following of Jesus Christ. "The joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of women and men of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in anyway, these are the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of the followers of Jesus Christ" (*The Church in the Modern World, #1*). Through its social teaching, the Church proclaims that the goods of the earth are to be enjoyed by all. "God intended the earth and all that it contains for the

use of every human being and people” (*The Church in the Modern World*, #69). “Every person has the right to find in the world what is necessary for themselves” (*The Development of the Peoples*, #22). “The suffering of the poor increases daily. This is not only a moral scandal but also a dangerous threat to our democratic stability” (*Hear the Cry of the Poor*, #28).

**War** is defined as a state of conflict between two or more sovereign nations carried on by force of arms. Catholic teaching recognizes the right of nations to defend themselves against unjust aggression and protect human rights. The Church holds that those who have others under their care must defend them from attack. Legitimate defense is not only a right but also a “grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others” and “the defense of the common good requires that an unjust aggressor be rendered unable to cause harm” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2265). World Peace is the ultimate goal.



**Just War Doctrine** lays out the criteria for going to war. The five criteria for justly entering into war are as follows:

1. One must have a just cause, such as the protection of basic human rights or the defense of the innocent from unjust aggression. War cannot be used for settling a grievance, for personal gain, for domination, or acquisition of land or goods.
2. One must have a “right intention” in seeking to restore order and justice. Even those with a just grievance cannot go to war out of hatred or a thirst for vengeance.

3. The use of force must be ordered by a competent and lawful authority with responsibility for the common good.
4. There must be a reasonable probability of success, and the expected benefits must be proportionate to the human and other costs of war.
5. All peaceful means of resolving the conflict must be exhausted. War must be a last resort and must never be the first choice.

# **A JUST WAR**

**MUST MEET THESE REQUIREMENTS**

## **1. A LAST RESORT**

Only if ALL peaceful methods fail

## **2. A JUST CAUSE**

Must correct a grave, immediate, ongoing evil

## **3. VALID AUTHORITY**

Must arise from a consistent policy or principle

## **4. PROBABLE SUCCESS**

Men can't be sent to die hopelessly

## **5. PROPORTIONALITY**

Force must be proportionate, and no more than necessary

## **6. EXIT STRATEGY**

It must be fought fairly and end as quickly as possible

When it comes to the justification of war, the following two important principles must be applied:

1) **Principle of Proportionality of Means**

This principle demands that the degree of force used must be reasonable in light of the military goal. In other words, one must not needlessly risk lives or cause more harm than one is trying to prevent.

2) **Principle of Discrimination (Noncombatant Immunity)**

This principle forbids targeting civilian populations. Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man.

# CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

*The Church's social teaching shows us how to build a just society and live lives of holiness in the 21st century.*

Each person is **SACRED**,  
made in God's image, equal in dignity.

Each person is **SOCIAL**,  
called to participate in family and community.

All people have **RIGHTS** and **RESPONSIBILITIES**.  
The right to life and its necessities, the responsibility to respect the rights of others and work for the common good.

We care for people who are **POOR** and vulnerable,  
before all else.

Workers have rights. **WORK** has dignity.  
We are partners with God in creation.

**SOLIDARITY** is our call.  
We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

We care for **CREATION**.  
We live in interdependence with all God has made.