

Unit 1 "God Wants Us to Say 'Yes'" Lesson 2
God, Our Creator, Loves Us

Objective: The students will be able to state that God 1) gives life and loves us and 2) wants us to live united to Him now and forever.

For the Catechist

The second lesson reiterates the key concept of theosis which was introduced first in the kindergarten text: God created us to live united with Him now and forever. This concept is foundational to an understanding of Eastern Christian thought and is repeated in every text of the series.

The lesson introduces the key aspects of salvation history: Creation, the Fall, and Jesus as the New Adam. Salvation history, in particular the Fall, is introduced here to undergird the later lessons (Unit 2) that explain turning away from evil and accepting Baptism. In Baptism, the effects of the Fall are reversed. In Baptism we die to this life so we can live eternally with God. The children will be presented with these same concepts of salvation history in the third grade book.

The Fall and the results of evil's entrance into the world are mentioned in this lesson but explored more fully in lesson 22. The focus of the lesson is to be on humanity's call to be united to God.

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted.)

Creation Stories

"A careful reading of the creation account reveals two separate stories. [Genesis] chapters 1 to 2:4 describe the creation of the universe in six days with God resting on the seventh, the Sabbath. In this account, humanity is the last element of creation brought into being. The second version begins with the creation of humankind, represented by Adam and Eve, and their fall into sin (2:5 to 3:24). Scripture scholars today attribute these two stories to different Hebrew cultural traditions. The first is the "priestly" tradition, the second is the "Yahwist" tradition, so named because references to God use the name 'YHWH' ("He-who-is") revealed to Moses" (LLI 20).

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: Trisagion (Beginning) Prayers

Introduction: Story of sculptor and creation **Need:** play dough

Read Text Aloud: Have students read text aloud. You may wish to read the Bible passage.

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

- *Basic:* God, Our Creator, Loves Us
- *Group:* "Paradise" Mural
- *Craft:* "Paradise" Craft

Closing: Trisagion (Beginning) Prayers

Come Bless the Lord Icon Packets:

Packet I: St. Michael the Archangel
Packet II:

Teaching Pic:

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"Neither of these authors intended to write a history or science textbook in the modern sense, but rather to impart deeper religious truths about the origin of humanity and the world. The writing of a history would imply the presence of a human witness when God alone existed. The Hebrew authors were fully aware of the immensity of the chasm separating God and man and would not want to attempt definitive explanations of particular mechanisms God might choose" (*LLI* 20-21).

The Fall

"The second creation story presents the truth of how humanity lost its friendship with God. Adam and Eve become the prototypes of the whole human race. God's creative intention for the human race was for people to be on intimate terms of friendship with Him and each other. 'It is not good for the man to be alone' (2:18 NAB). The account depicts the created state as a life of perfection with neither guilt nor death. Yet, humanity did not remain faithful to God's plan. They ate of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil and lost innocence and incorruptibility. God then banished them from the tree of life and from the garden.

"This narrative wrestles with the fundamental faith issue: how did humanity become weak, prone to evil and unable to refrain from sin and malice? Its roots lie in our basic pattern of disobedience to God from the very beginning. We try to decide what is good or evil on our own terms, thereby usurping God's prerogative. Death, evil and misery follow " (*LLI* 21-22).

Salvation through Jesus Christ

"This latter creation story forms the foundation for understanding God's salvation through Jesus Christ in the New Testament. In Rom 5:12-21, Jesus is called the new Adam who has replaced the old Adam's pattern of disobedience by faithfulness to the Father. He thereby gives us new access to the tree of life—identified by the Church as the wood of the cross which leads to the glorious resurrection.

"Similarly, the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John presents the mystery of Christ as a new creation. St. John identifies Jesus as the Word of God (Logos) active in creation ('through Him all things came into being, and apart from Him nothing created came to be'— Jn 1:3 NAB). This Logos is described as entering the world in the incarnation to restore us to friendship with the Father. 'Of His fullness we have all received—grace following upon grace. For while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (John 1: 16-17). This Gospel, read in the Byzantine Divine Liturgy on the feast of Pascha (Easter), proclaims our restoration to life in the risen Christ and the beginning of a new Creation. Pascha is the 'First day of the week, the Feast of Feasts,' celebrating our return to paradise, where we are now invited to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, fruit of the Cross, the tree of life, 'for the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting'" (*LLI* 22).

God initiates our salvation

"The mystery of our faith, according to St. Paul, is 'Christ in us, our hope of glory'(Colossians 1:27), what the Greek Fathers would later call theosis (deification) The coming of Christ opened to us this mystery of God's plan for all humanity. In the Incarnation of His Son we see that God intended the union of all with Him through Christ. In Him we are united with God, made like Him, and restored to His friendship" (*LLII* 55).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

[Gather the children at the icon corner.] *We have a very important lesson today; let's get ready to pray and begin class. Our prayer is the same as last week: the Trisagion or Beginning Prayers.*

Introduction

[As you tell the story, play with play dough as if making an object.] *Here is a story to begin our lesson. Once there was a sculptor who lived with his family in a cottage in the woods. All day long he created. He made little bowls and vases. He made toy trains and bikes. One day he decided to make a little girl out of clay. He gave the girl a face like his own child's and clothes and shoes. He worked on the clay girl until she looked almost real. "She would be a wonderful little girl," he thought to himself.*

He wished and wished she could come alive. He would love her very much. He would love her because he had made her. She wouldn't have to earn his love. She was his creation. He would love her as his own child, and he would want her to be with him always. How do you think the story could end? [Allow a few responses. When someone says the little girl doll became alive, ask, "Did she say thank you to the one who created her?" "Did she stay with her creator?"]

God created each of us. He created us in His image. He shared His love with us, and we are to love others. Like the sculptor in the story, God loves us because He created us. God will always love us and wants us to stay with Him always.

Do you know the names of the first people God created? [Allow responses.] *God gave them life. He placed them in a garden called paradise. A paradise is a beautiful wonderful place. The name of the garden was Eden. He told them they could eat fruit from all the trees but one. It stood in the middle of the garden. It was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Imagine yourself in a wonderful garden with lots of fruit trees all around.* [Allow responses to the following:] *Do you think you could obey God and not eat from just one tree? Do you think Adam and Eve obeyed God?*

Let's find out.

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God, Our Creator, Loves Us



God created a glorious world. God gave us life. God gave us life so we could share His life. Adam and Eve were the first persons God created.

God created Adam to be united to Him. Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden. It was Paradise. God wanted human beings to live united to Him in Paradise.

But something bad happened. Adam and Eve didn't follow God's plan.

Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

Adam and Eve were the first persons God created.

Do you know how God created Adam? Listen to these words and use your imagination to see this happening: 'A stream was watering the land when God formed man out of the clay of the ground. He blew the breath of life into him and man became alive.' (Genesis 2:6-7) [Read quote again.]

God wanted human beings to live united to Him in paradise.

[Allow responses to the following:] What is paradise? (A beautiful, wonderful place where nothing is ever wrong.) What was the name of the garden? (Eden) Can you imagine how wonderful it would be to live in paradise united to God? God created us so we could be united to Him. What does "united" mean? (United means joined together, like two hands clasped.)

[Read story, pausing to ask the following:]

"If you eat of it," God said, "you are doomed to die."

[Allow responses to the following:] God told Adam that he could eat from all the trees in the garden but one.

Which tree could he not eat from? (The tree in the middle of the garden: the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.)

"You certainly MAY eat this fruit," he said.

Who spoke to Eve and told her she could eat the fruit? (The devil in the form of a serpent)

... Adam and Eve died one day.

What happened after they ate the fruit? (They knew they had done wrong; they were put out of the garden and Archangel Michael was made to guard the gate.) Because of Adam and Eve, sin and death came into the world.

Here is the story.



God told Adam that he could eat the fruit of all the trees but one. The tree was in the middle of the garden. He could not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. "The moment you eat from it," God said, "you are surely doomed to die!" (Genesis 2:15-17).

One day the devil came in the form of a serpent and tempted Eve and Adam. He spoke to Eve about the tree of knowledge of good and evil. "You certainly will not die! You **MAY** eat this fruit!" he said. (Genesis 3:4-5).

The fruit looked good, so Eve took some and ate and shared some with Adam. He took it and ate it. As soon as they did so, they knew they had done wrong. (Genesis 3:6-7).

Adam and Eve did not do what God wanted. They were put outside the garden. Archangel Michael was sent to guard the gate to paradise. Adam and Eve were no longer united to God. Just as God said, Adam and Eve died one day. (Genesis 3:23-24).

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We Call Jesus the new Adam.

Why do we call Jesus the new Adam? Remember how Adam was united to God before he disobeyed God? All human persons after Adam have also disobeyed God and have not been perfectly united to God. Jesus, God's Son, never disobeyed God. God started creation over again with Jesus. Jesus was always united to God as God intended for Adam and Eve. Jesus was the new Adam. God sent Jesus because He loves us and wants us united to Him again.

It is wonderful to be united to God.

Let's think again about how wonderful it was to be in the Garden of Eden, close to God and with everything perfect. Even though we can't be in paradise, we can be close to God. How? (Through prayer and Holy Communion) God wants us close to Him. He created us to live united to Him now and forever. Tell me a time when you felt very loved and very safe. [Allow responses.] When we are close to God, we feel that same way, loved and safe. It is wonderful to be united to God.

Let's review: *Who created us and loves us? (God) Why did God create us? (He created us to live united to Him now and forever.) What do we call the event where Adam and Eve were put out of the garden? (The Fall) Why do we call Jesus the new Adam? (Jesus was always united to God as God intended for Adam and Eve.)*

Activity Tracks

Basic: "God, Our Creator, Loves Us

God created Adam and Eve to live united to Him forever, but they didn't obey God. We call that the Fall, because they fell from the place God intended for them. God needed to begin again to unite people to Himself. A long time after Adam and Eve, whom did He send to be the new Adam? (Jesus) Let's see if you can order the pictures in the way the story occurred. Below that are sentences with blanks. These sentences are also part of your text we just read. Can you fill them in? If not, we can work together. Two of the words are used twice.

When Adam and Eve did not listen to God, they sinned. Sin is anything that is against God. Sin and death came into the world because they did not listen. The world became a dark place.

A very long time after Adam and Eve, God sent Jesus. God sent Jesus because He loves us. He sent Jesus so we could be united to Him once again. We call Jesus the new Adam.



Jesus taught us how to be united to God. He taught us how to follow God. He taught us that God loves us. Those who followed Jesus became God's people.

God created our life. God, our Creator, loves us. He created us to live united to Him now and forever. It is wonderful to be united to God.

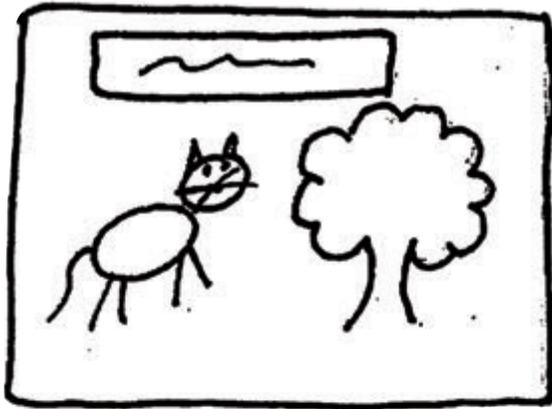
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God, Our Creator, Loves Us

Fill in the blanks with words from below.

1. God, our F a t h e r, loves us.
2. God gave us l i f e so we could share His l i f e.
3. Adam didn't f o l l o w God's plan.
4. Adam and Eve were no longer u n i t e d to God.
5. God s e n t Jesus because He loves us.
6. It is wonderful to be u n i t e d to God.

united life Father sent follow



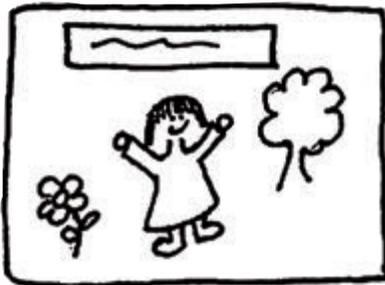
Group: Paradise Mural

Materials: poster board, markers, paper, crayons, glue stick, scissors

[Ahead of time title poster board "God Created Us to Live United to Him in Paradise."] *We learned today that God created a glorious world. He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, which we call Paradise. He wanted people to live united to Him in paradise. By working together on a mural or poster, let's remember that God wanted us to live in paradise. [Show poster and read title.] Each of you can color what animals and plants you think you'd find in paradise; then we'll cut out what you've made and put it on the poster.*

Craft: "Paradise" Craft

Materials: "God Created Us" worksheet, large heavier paper, construction paper, stickers of animals and birds, markers



[Have sample ready to show children.] *Today we learned that God created us to live united to Him in paradise, and that is the title of our project today. What do you think paradise looked like? [Allow responses.] You have a chance today to create paradise. You have to put the title strip on, and you have to make yourself part of the picture. Then you can draw and cut out animals and birds and trees from construction paper, or you can place stickers on the poster.*

Closing: [Gather children at icon corner.] *Let's close our class with a prayer. Today we learned that God loves each of us. Always remember that. Last week we learned that God is Trinity. When we say the "Holy God" prayer, we honor the Trinity. Let's pray the Trisagion or Beginning Prayers.*

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