

# Lesson 3 - Made in the Divine Image

## ***Objectives***

By the end of this lesson students will be able to ...

- state that human beings are the highpoint of God's Creation.
- understand that we are made in God's image and called to grow in His likeness.
- recognize in themselves the similar spiritual qualities that God shares with them.

## ***For the Catechist***

In many places middle school students are taught scientific explanations of the development of life, generally without any reference to God. While curriculum writers often exclude God from their worldview, many scientists would not. Even though they cannot prove scientifically divine Creation, they agree that it is not an unreasonable assumption. In fact, today's scientists have used a time reference about the development of humans similar to the one we read in Genesis. They state that if the development of the universe were thought of in terms of one year, humans may be thought to have appeared on December 31. Scripture describes Creation in terms of one week and states that humans emerge at the end of Creation because humans are the highpoint of the development of life on earth. Genesis affirms humans are the way they are because we are made after the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26).

The glory of humanity is found within God's plan from the beginning. Humankind is given dominion over all that has been created. Each person has the ability to share in the fullness of the very life of God. By reaching perfect union with God, humankind brings all creation to fulfillment.

As a catechist, consider explaining why public school life-science or biology courses never mention God. In fact, some students may also have encountered teachers or other students who dismiss religion and reject the very idea of God. On the other hand, they may have contact with literalists or fundamentalists who accept only a factually historical understanding of Genesis. At the end of this lesson, ask the students to share how they would explain the Church's teaching on Creation. Help them understand that we believe God created the world because he wanted to share His existence with us. In Genesis we learned that God created humans in His image and likeness so that we can share completely in God's existence. We believe God's story of Creation in Genesis tells us *why* we were created—not *how* and *when*. The scientists and historians are concerned with those questions.

## ***Materials Needed***

*Opening Prayer:* Vespers folder

*Introduction:* "Progression of Creation," pens, pencils

*Guided Reading:* student text, wallboard or easel pad and markers

*Ancient Wisdom:* pens or pencils

*Vespers:* *Folders*, prayer sheets, tape or glue, scissors

*Activity A:* "Journal worksheet," pens or pencils, Journal folders

*Closing Prayer:* Vespers folder

## 1. Opening Prayer

- Gather in front of the icon corner. Light the candle and hand out their Vespers folder.
- Pray the prayers in the Vespers booklet.

## 2. Review

Review the main points of the previous lesson:

- God is the Creator and source of all things, and everything God created is good.
- The two Creation stories in the Bible tell us the meaning of Creation.
- The Bible does not give a scientific explanation or an historical account of Creation.
- We can perceive God in what He has made.

### 3a. Introduction

- a. Distribute copies of "Progression of Creation" worksheet (p. 27).
- b. Have the students brainstorm qualities of the created beings indicated on the worksheet and list them in the appropriate columns.
- c. Discuss which creatures use which senses (sight, touch, smell, etc.) and whether animals can have emotions (e.g. fear or pleasure) or understand their feelings.
- d. Show that there is a certain hierarchy in material creation, with human beings as the highpoint. Tell the students that today they will learn according to their faith what it means to be human.

### 3b. Alternative Introduction

Ask the students what they have learned in school about the origins of life in general and human life in particular. Allow each to tell what they have heard without correction. When all have expressed themselves, indicate the basic outlines of the question as follows:

1. With the rise of science in Western Europe, some people began to feel that science had proved the Bible was false. Others saw things differently.
2. Today some scientists believe that the universe cannot be explained without God, while others feel that it simply came into being by chance. Stress that science and religion complement one another when you understand the proper role of each.
3. Emphasize that we believe the story of Creation in Genesis tells us *why* we were created. The scientists are concerned with the *how* and *when* we were created.

## 4. Guided Reading, Pages 12-13

- Before the reading, summarize the objectives of the lesson on a wall pad or easel pad so that the page can be preserved and used for review next week.

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## Background Reading (The Image of God)

"In the human being heaven and earth touch one another. In the human being God enters into his creation; the human being is directly related to God. God's words in the Old Testament are valid for every individual human being: 'I call you by name and you are mine.' Each human being is known by God and loved by Him. Each is willed by God and each is God's image.... Human life stands under God's special protection, because each human being—however wretched or exalted he or she may be, however sick or suffering, however good-for-nothing or important, whether born or unborn, whether incurably ill or radiant with health—each one bears God's breath in himself or herself, each one is God's image... When the human person is no longer seen as standing under God's protection and bearing God's breath, then the human being begins to be viewed in utilitarian fashion. It is then that the barbarity appears that tramples upon human dignity" (*ITB* 45).

- Assign each student a different section of the text to read. Have them highlight the most important part of the section assigned and note any parts they find difficult to understand.
- After a few minutes have each student summarize aloud the section that he or she has read.
- Then have the whole group read the same section, looking for the most important or difficult parts.
- Have the group give suggestions about other ideas presented in that section. Encourage the students to restate the central meaning of the text.

### **Reinforce the principal ideas in each section:**

- *Introductory Paragraphs:* Creation is the work of God who shares existence with His creation.
- *Human Beings: the Highpoint of God's Creation:* Genesis presents human beings either as the last or as the first to be created and therefore as the highpoint of creation.
- *In God's Image:* Human life could not have evolved from lower species without the direct intervention of God.
- Genesis presents humans as somehow godlike: in God's image (Genesis 1) or having His breath of life (Genesis 2).
- Being in the image of God means having the ability to be creative and to love.
- Ask the students: "What is the difference between looking like your parents and acting like them?" (*Your looks are given; your actions come more by choice*)
- Stress that the Church Fathers explained this difference between *image* and *likeness*.
- Ask the students: *Who is the ideal human being, the perfect image of God the Father? (Jesus).* Encourage them to identify how Jesus shows us how to live out our image and likeness to God. (*Possible answer: Jesus shows us how to live in peace, love, joy, and kindness.*)

### **5. Ancient Wisdom for Today**

- Distribute worksheet along with pens or pencils.
- Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the quote on the worksheet. Have the students write their answers and then share them with the class.

[Suggestions: To become "partakers of the divine nature" and to "be like Him"; we are to love as God loves us; I can be nicer, kinder, more loving, less angry, honest, and helpful.]

### **6. Icon Study**

- Read the information about the icon of the Creation of Adam on page 15 of the student text.
- Before you ask the questions, state the following: *Every icon has a number of signs or symbols to make us think about the mystery it represents. Think about how the signs or symbols in this icon tell us about the mystery of our creation.*

### **Background Reading (in the Beginning)**

"The Gospel according to St. John begins exactly as the OT begins, 'In the beginning.' John's opening line actually has more in common with other Gospels than may appear at first glance. Mark also begins with 'the beginning' and the first words of Matthew's original Greek are 'the book of the begetting' (*geneseos*). Mark's opening sentence announces 'Jesus Christ the Son of God,' while Matthew has 'Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.' Briefly put, Matthew, Mark and John all begin their Gospels with a profound theological title and with a word that specifically reminds us of the book of Genesis.

"We may understand the word 'beginning' to refer to the beginning of creation and therefore of time itself; this is the meaning it has in Genesis 1:1" (*HG 249-50*).

1. *Is Christ depicted as larger than life or is Adam depicted as smaller than life? (Christ is larger because He is the perfect image of the Father; Adam is smaller because he is not yet perfected.)*
2. *Why is Adam shown sitting on a rock, while Christ is shown at a distance above the ground? (Adam is drawn from the earth; Christ is of the heavens.)*
3. *Duplicate the gesture Christ is using. How would you define that gesture: what does it do? (A blessing, it is a sign of sharing the life of God with a person or object.)*
4. *In that gesture Christ's hand is held in a certain way. What does this "hand sign" mean and where else in the icon do you see it? (ICXC, the abbreviation of Jesus Christ in Greek. They are also written over His head.)*
5. *What might explain the color of the earth? (It is "the clay of the ground" in Genesis 2:7).*
  - Encourage the students to share their answers to the questions at the bottom of the page.

## 7. Vespers

- Have the students read the information about Vespers aloud.
- Distribute the Vespers folder and the section of the Psalm (see page 37 in this instructional manual). *[Two copies of the prayer are on the same page to save paper.]*
- Ask the students to tape or glue this first section of the Psalm on the second page in their Vesper booklet.

## 8. Activity A: My Personal Journal

Distribute Worksheet A along with pens or pencils. Have the students complete the worksheet in silence (or you can play religious music if available) and place it in their folder. Plan accordingly, but they should need no more than 5 minutes to complete the journal entry.

## 9. Summary

Ask the students what the main idea of today's lesson is. Refer back to the objectives that you might have listed on the board or read at the beginning of class. Ask the students if they have any further comments or questions about what you discussed today.

## 10. Closing Prayer

- Gather the students at the icon corner.
- Pray the opening prayers that are in their Vespers booklet.

## Background Reading (The Word in Creation)

"...Although the word 'word' does not occur there, in Genesis 1 it is clear that God creates by means of His word. He says, 'Let there be...' and things come into being. Israel also knows the prophetic 'word,' which can intervene and impact people's lives dramatically (Isaiah 55:10-11). In texts of the third century AD and later, we find rabbis using the Aramaic *memro* ('word') as a substitute for 'God.' In Aramaic versions of the Old Testament 'the word of God' is said to act out all the great deeds of salvation history...

"The first two verses of the prologue clearly establish the divinity and eternity of the Word. John insists that there was never a time when God did not exist and there was never a time when the Word was not already 'with God.' Jesus will reaffirm this truth at the Last Supper: 'Father, glorify me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made' (John 17:5). In the fourth century the Nicene Creed would express the idea more exactly; the Son is 'eternally begotten from the Father'" (HG 251-252).

## Psalm 103 (104)

Bless the Lord, my soul!  
Lord, my God, you are great indeed!  
You are clothed with majesty and glory,  
robed in the light as with a cloak.  
You spread out the heavens like a tent;  
you raised your palace upon the waters.  
You make the clouds your chariot;  
you travel on the wings of the wind.  
You make the winds your messengers;  
flaming fires, your ministers.  
You fixed the earth on its foundation,  
never to be moved.  
The ocean covered it like a garment;  
above the mountains stood the waters.  
At your roar they took flight;  
at the sound of your thunder they fled.  
They rushed up the mountains, down the valleys  
to the place you had fixed for them.  
You set a limit they cannot pass;  
never again will they cover the earth.

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## The Progression of Creation

There are a number of things that we share with other elements of the material creation. Write in the appropriate boxes below the properties or abilities of each type of creature. Which abilities are shared by plants and animals, animals and humans, etc. and which are not?

ABILITY	NON-LIVING THINGS	PLANTS	ANIMALS	HUMANS
<i>To walk</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>

Plants, animals and humans can do many of the same things. They are higher forms of being than, e.g. minerals. Animals and humans can do things that trees or plants cannot do. But there are certain things that only humans can do. Humans alone are created in the image and likeness of God.

## MY PERSONAL JOURNAL

List three qualities of your parents which reflect the goodness of God.

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When was the last time you recognized and thanked them for these qualities?

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Why might it be important to thank them more often?

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How do the God-like qualities with which you have been gifted help you in your relationships with others?

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