

4—Change: Creation Is Not Finished

Objectives

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

- recognize that God is not finished creating.
- understand that Creation awaits its perfection in Christ who is the beginning and the end.
- state that from the beginning God willed humans to have dominion over His Creation.
- define "to have dominion" as a way to say all of us are called to be stewards or caretakers of God's Creation.

For the Catechist

From the beginning human beings have been called by God to "fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28) and to exercise dominion over all created things. This mandate is given by God so that humans could join with God in bringing Creation to fulfillment. All Creation "groans and is in agony even now"; it is destined, however, to be transformed in Christ.

This lesson emphasizes that Creation is not a thing of the past. Creation is ongoing because it is not yet finished. The universe is evolving, both in a physical and spiritual sense. This history of Creation may also be found in the life of every believer. Created good, humans are intended to achieve more than natural goodness. We are called to fulfillment as a New Creation united to God Himself in Jesus Christ. This new phase can only come about by the passing away of the old. We need a spiritual conversion that leads to the New Birth of eternal life.

Human beings, therefore, fulfill their role in God's plan by being involved in this changing process:

1. We are called to serve Creation as stewards or caregivers who help transform the world and bring it to its fulfillment.
2. We are called to cooperate with God's grace by a life of conversion which leads to our own transformation.

Because adolescents are not comfortable with the fact of change and growth, they need reassurance that their growth process is a good and normal thing. This lesson helps them see this constant change in the universe and themselves as good and as leading on to something greater. Also, the lesson presents the pain of growth as a necessary sign of the importance of what is happening. Help them realize that humans and the universe are struggling as they are being called to perfection. Help them accept the challenge to make the right choices that will lead to their perfection.

Materials Needed

Opening Prayer: Vespers folder

Introduction: White sheets of paper and pens and 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," pens or pencils, Journal folders

Activity B: "Stewards of Creation" pens or pencils

Closing Prayer: Vespers folder

1. Opening Prayer

- Gather in front of the icon corner. Light the candle and hand out their Vespers booklet.
- Pray all the beginning prayers. Allow students a few moments to voice their own prayers either aloud or silently

2. Review

Review the main points of the previous lesson:

- Human beings are the highpoint of God's Creation.
- We are made in God's image and called to grow in His likeness.
- We can recognize in ourselves similar spiritual qualities that God shares with us.

3. Introduction

- a. Start by telling the students to try to remember what they were like in elementary school. Then have the students fold a blank sheet of paper in two. At the top of the first column write **THEN**, and at the top of the second column write **NOW**.
- b. Ask them to answer the following questions by writing an answer from the past in the **THEN** column, and from the present in the **NOW** column:
 - 1 *What did/do you spend your free time doing?*
 - 2 *Name some of your friends.*
 - 3 *How much time did/do you spend with your family?*
 - 4 *What are some activities you did/do with your family?*
 - 5 *What are some activities you did/do around the church ?*
- c. Ask the students to place a star by the ones that have different answers for each column.
- d. Discuss how this activity shows we do change even if we don't try to.
- e. Tell them that this lesson will help them understand that God is with us as we change. He is helping us use our changes to grow closer to Him.

4. Guided Reading, (Page 17 - Our Changes)

- Ask for volunteers to read this page aloud.
- Discuss the idea of creation being "not perfect" and "not yet finished." Ask whether this idea surprises them or have they thought of this before. Discuss other examples of ways they noticed creation is still being developed.

Guided Reading (Page 18—The Alpha and the Omega)

- Ask volunteers to read this section.
- Explain that *alpha* and *omega* are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, representing *the beginning and the end*. Ask whether we have a similar expression in English ("*from A to Z*").
- Stress that Christ is the *Ultimate Alpha* (because He created all things) and the *Ultimate Omega* (because all things will be fulfilled in Him).

Background Reading (Stewardship)

"Because we are made in the image of the Creator, we have a responsibility for creation. Our becoming like God involves three interrelated tasks given to us by Him. First God called us to be stewards of the creation. Adam was not told by God "Here is the earth, do whatever you want with it, do your own thing," but rather, "the Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it" (Genesis 2:15). We are not owners of the creation, free to do whatever we wish; rather we are its administrators, managing the creation for God, the owner, according to His will. We must render accounts to Him for our stewardship" (LLIII 8-9).

Guided Reading (Page 18—Stewards of Creation and Life)

- Have the students read together this section. Tell them to be ready to indicate and discuss something they find of interest in this section.
- Ask the students what they know about ecology: What is it? Why is it important? Discuss things young people can do to support this movement (conserve water and energy, use biodegradable products, etc.)
- Ask the students if they think ecology is in the Bible and, if so, where? Then have them reread the Scriptures quoted in the section Stewards of Creation and discuss how these passages are "ecological"?
- Discuss the difference between being stewards and being consumers. Stress that stewards respect creation and its Creator while consumers use up creation for their own comfort.
- Summarize this section, emphasizing the following:
 - All kinds of people appreciate the need to preserve the planet.
 - Christians do so because we know that God places us humans as the stewards or caretakers of His creation.
 - We are caring for creation while it is waiting to be transformed by the presence of its Creator.

Guided Reading (Page 18—Constant Change)

- Ask for a volunteer to read the first paragraph of this section aloud.
- Have all the students read aloud the Scripture.
- Allow time to discuss if they ever heard these words and if they think these words describe what they have experienced in their lives.

5. Ancient Wisdom for Today

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: A charitable heart is concerned about all creatures and the whole of creation; I will take care of God's creation by not polluting and by helping all things live and grow.

6. Icon Study

- Read the information about Saint Nicholas on page 20 of the student text.
- Ask if they ever thought about becoming a Saint. Encourage a discussion about how they are to live and what choices they would have to make. [Possibilities: Saints choose to follow Christ is all that they do. How would they react to cursing, bullying, and smoking? How do these activities lead you away from Christ?]

Background Reading (Stewardship)

".. .in relation to the environment, we are to display what *The Philokalia* and other spiritual texts of the Orthodox Church call *enkrateia*, 'self-restraint.' That is to say, we are to practice a voluntary self-limitation in our consumption of food and natural resources Each of us is called to make the crucial distinction between what we want and what we need. Only through such self-denial, through our willingness sometimes to forego and to say 'no' or 'enough' will we rediscover our true human place in the universe" (Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, in an address to the Fourth International Symposium on the Environment).

7. Vespers

- Have the students read the information about Vespers aloud.
- Distribute the Vespers folder and the section of the Psalm (see page 44 in this manual).
- Ask the students to tape or glue this section of the Psalm on the second page that has the first part of the Psalm taped.

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. Activity B: Stewards of Creation

- Distribute worksheet along with pens or pencils.
- Discuss how waste is a kind of contempt for God's gifts. Review the ways the worksheet suggests for reusing household items and ask whether any of these items are recycled in their home.
- Have the students complete the worksheet.
- Urge them to use the worksheet as a log of what they do in the week ahead. Plan to discuss this at the next session.

10. Summary

Ask the students what the main idea of today's lesson. 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.

11. Closing Prayer

- Gather the students at the icon corner.
- Pray the words of the Psalm that are in their Vespers booklet.
- Encourage the students to continue praying the prayers they learned last week. Tell them that many people have memorized Psalms, and maybe some of them might want to memorize this Psalm.

Background Reading (The Psalms)

"Of all the books of the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms is probably the one Eastern Christians know best and love most. Older persons will remember how the cantor used to sing the entire "Psalter of King David," as it was called, at the wakes of departed parishioners. In every Divine Liturgy, the Antiphons, Prokeimenon, Alleluia verses and Communion Hymn are taken from the Psalms. Vespers, Matins, and the other hours prayed by the Church are services built around the recitation of three or more Psalms. Many Eastern Christians recite Psalm 50 as part of their daily morning and evening prayers [also known as the "Divine Praises"]...

"Traditionally King David is regarded as the author of the psalms, but this is an oversimplification. Most of the Psalms bear some sort of 'title*' or inscription and some of these connect particular Psalms with persons other than King David. The most frequently mentioned are the 'Sons of Korah,' whom we know to have been a guild or family of temple singers (2 Chronicles 5-6). The names of Moses, Solomon, Heman, Ethan, and Asaph also appear in Psalm titles. In the LXX, Psalms are also ascribed to the prophet Haggai and Zehariah" (*OT* 160-162).

(Cut out this section of the prayer and add it to the first part of Psalm 103 (104) that you placed last week in your Vespers folder.)

You made springs flow into channels
that wind among the mountains.
They give drink to every beast of the field;
here wild asses quench their thirst.
Beside them the birds of heaven nest;
among the branches they sing.
You water the mountains from your palace;
by your labor the earth abounds.
You raise grass for the cattle
and plants for our beasts of burden.
You bring bread from the earth,
and wine to gladden our hearts,
Oil to make our faces gleam,
food to build our strength.
The trees of the Lord drink their fill,
the cedars of Lebanon, which you planted.
There the birds build their nests;
junipers are the home of the stork.
The high mountains are for wild goats;
the rocky cliffs, a refuge for badgers.
You made the moon to mark the seasons,
the sun that knows the hour of its setting.
You bring darkness and night falls,
then all the beasts of the forest roam abroad.
Young lions roar for prey;
they seek their food from God.
When the sun rises, they steal away
and rest in their dens.
People go forth to their work,
to their labor till evening falls.

MY PERSONAL JOURNAL

Reread Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 that is included in your student book. As you are reading it, think about different times in your life that apply to this reading. Answer the following questions as you think about your life.

Choose one of the times mentioned in the prayer, and write an event in your life that it could be related to. Who was with you? Were you alone? How did you feel? _____

Name the happy aspects of experiencing change in your life.

Describe one time in which you suffered during a change in your life.

How can suffering be an important part in the growth process of life?

How does laughing and loving help us change our lives? Why are they important aspects in our lives?

Could you use the words from Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 to help someone who is suffering or depressed? If so, how?

STEWARDS OF CREATION

At one time our ancestors treated all things as valuable. If they dropped a piece of bread on the ground, they would pick it up and kiss it. Today people throw away food they don't want or things that can be reused. Record what you can do as a steward of creation to reuse or recycle the following household items:

Newspapers _____

Kitchen Waste _____

Leftover Food _____

Plastic Grocery Bags _____

Margarine or Other Food Containers _____

List some useable things you have thrown out during the week. What might you have done with them as a steward of creation?
