

God the Creator

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. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ~ Genesis 1:1-3

IN THESE MAJESTIC SENTENCES, Sacred Scripture introduces us to God the Creator — the maker of everything, who himself is uncreated — and to his creation, the work of his will. God created “Heaven and earth,” that is, all that is, seen and unseen, the entire material universe in which we reside, as well as every spiritual being who inhabits the Heavenly places. Nothing exists apart from him, and everything that he creates is good (see Gn 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). All that is not God is creature — each of us and everything around us, including the time in which we live and the space in which we spread out. Everything that *is* owes its being to the Creator who brought it into existence out of nothing, without any help whatsoever, and holds it in existence from moment to moment by nothing other than his own loving and abiding will (see 2 Mc 7:28).

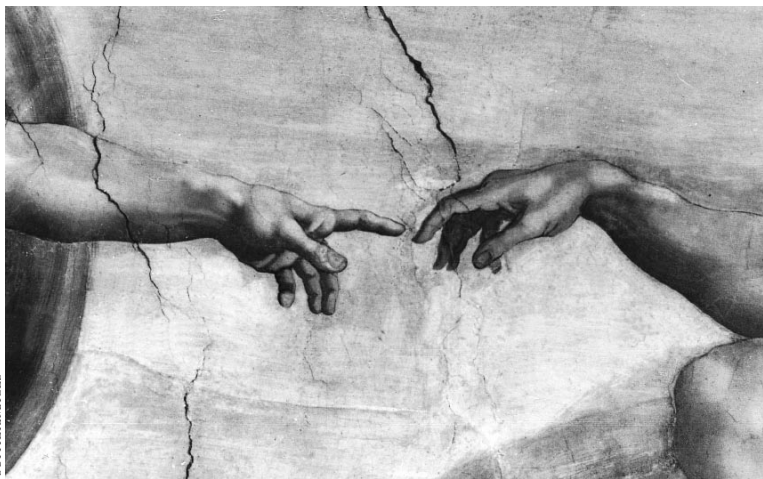
Why did God create anything at all? “The world was made for the glory of God¹ ... not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it”² (CCC 293). He does not need to create us because he is lonely or in need of our love. Rather, God creates out of his goodness and superabundant love.

St. Thomas Aquinas, a great doctor of the Church, wrote, “[c]reatures came into existence when the key of love opened his hand”³ (CCC 293).

From the laws that govern the entire universe to

even the lowliest creature, each reflects, in its own way, God’s goodness and beauty and has its own perfection. And, at the express design of the Creator, no creature is self-sufficient; all, in some way, complete and serve one another. The “six days” of creation are symbolically used by the book of Genesis to describe a hierarchy of creation, the inner

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Creation of Adam (detail) in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, by Michelangelo Buonarroti, 1475-1564

nature and ordering of all creation to the praise of God, and God’s love for each of his creatures, most especially for humankind, the crown of creation.

What does this mean for us?

The fact that God is our Creator means that we owe him everything and are bound in justice to obey him and to give him an account of our lives. We were not created out of any necessity. God is infinitely perfect and blessed in himself and has no need of creatures. He is totally happy with or without us.

“Thou didst clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life

¹ *Dei Filius*, can. § 5 from Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* 3025 (1965)

² St. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.* I, 2, 2, 1.

³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sent.* 2, Prol.



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and steadfast love; and thy care has preserved my spirit” (Jb 10:11-12). If God were to stop willing our existence for an instant, we would not simply die but actually *cease to be*. Were God to withhold his providence, we could not survive for even a moment: *“In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind”* (Jb 12:10). Consequently, we are utterly in God’s power and are entirely dependent upon him both now and forever. As Saint Paul says: *“In him we live and move and have our being”* (Acts 17:28). This shatters any idea we may have of independence or self-sufficiency. We are entirely dependent on Divine Providence, who guides us with wisdom and love.

God blessed our first parents and commanded them to *“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”* (Gn 1:28). We participate in God’s creative work through the use of our sexual gifts. The gifts of masculinity and femininity enable man and woman to become *“one flesh”* (Gn 2:24) and are

capable of the greatest possible gift, that of becoming cooperators with God in the creation of a new human person. Thus we receive from the hand of the Creator the gift of a new responsibility, and our parental love is called to become for our children the visible sign of the very love of God, *“from whom every family in Heaven and on earth is named”* (Eph 3:15).

God has given humankind the power to participate in his creative work in other ways as well. This is clearly seen in the myriad of human enterprises and accomplishments: the great masterpieces of literature, art, music, and architecture; the great growth in our understanding of the physical laws of God’s universe; and communications, transportation, medical, and other discoveries that continue to make life on earth easier. These creative abilities are a sign of God’s consistent providence and his desire that we live lives full of joy, beauty, happiness, and love.

God also entrusted to us stewardship of the created world. Stewardship of creation is not only a great blessing but also a grave responsibility. We must care for the earth and adhere to its created order and goodness. It also means that our bodies, as part of that creation, should be respected. Like the rest of creation, they too are gifts from God that are to be cared for and enhanced in ways that respect the inherent goodness and order placed in them by God.

“Stewardship over creation, our bodies included, is at the basis of Christian morality.”

St. Paul, exhorting the Corinthians, says, *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify*

God in your body” (1 Cor 6:19-20). Stewardship over creation, our bodies included, is at the basis of Christian morality and the starting point of any discussion on the matter. Since God has made us free, we must answer for all that we do *on our own responsibility*.

Finally, we cannot speak about creation without saying a word about the problem of evil (for a fuller discussion, see handout on The Mystery of Evil). All of us have been gripped by the pain of evil — a friend killed by a drunk driver, a child born handicapped, the premature death of a parent. Such situations reflect the reality that we live in a fallen world, a world into which sin, suffering, and death were brought by the disobedience of our first parents. God did not create evil and does not will it, but can bring good even from evil, for *“we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him”* (Rom 8:28).

(CCC 1, 279-314, 325-326, 337-344)