

Selected Paragraphs from *The Catechism*

(See Page 156 in the *Commentary*)

337 God himself created the visible world in all its richness, diversity and order. Scripture presents the work of the Creator symbolically as a succession of six days of divine "work", concluded by the "rest" of the seventh day. On the subject of creation, the sacred text teaches the truths revealed by God for our salvation, permitting us to "recognize the inner nature, the value and the ordering of the whole of creation to the praise of God."

268 Of all the divine attributes, only God's omnipotence is named in the Creed: to confess this power has great bearing on our lives. We believe that his might is *universal*, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything. God's power is loving, for he is our Father, and *mysterious*, for only faith can discern it when it "is made perfect in weakness".

279 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Holy Scripture begins with these solemn words. The profession of faith takes them up when it confesses that God the Father almighty is "Creator of heaven and earth" (*Apostles' Creed*), "of all that is, seen and unseen" (*Nicene Creed*). We shall speak first of the Creator, then of creation and finally of the fall into sin from which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to raise us up again.

280 Creation is the foundation of "all God's saving plans," the "beginning of the history of salvation" that culminates in Christ. Conversely, the mystery of Christ casts conclusive light on the mystery of creation and reveals the end for which "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth": from the beginning, God envisaged the glory of the new creation in Christ.

290 - 292 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth": three things are affirmed in these first words of Scripture: the eternal God gave a beginning to all that exists outside of himself; he alone is Creator (the verb "create" - Hebrew *bara* - always has God for its subject). The totality of what exists (expressed by the formula "the heavens and the earth") depends on the One who gives it being. "In the beginning was the Word. . . and the Word was God. . . all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." The New Testament reveals that God created everything by the eternal Word, his beloved Son. In him "all things were created, in heaven and on earth. . . all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." The Church's faith likewise confesses the creative action of the Holy Spirit, the "giver of life", "the Creator Spirit" (*Veni, Creator Spiritus*), the "source of every good". The Old Testament suggests and the New Covenant reveals the creative action of the Son and the Spirit, inseparably one with that of the Father. This creative co-operation is clearly affirmed in the Church's rule of faith: "There exists but one God. . . he is the Father, God, the Creator, the author, the giver of order. He made all things by *himself*, that is, by his Word and by his Wisdom", "by the Son and the Spirit" who, so to speak, are "his hands". Creation is the common work of the Holy Trinity.

703 The Word of God and his Breath are at the origin of the being and life of every creature: It belongs to the Holy Spirit to rule, sanctify, and animate creation, for he is God, consubstantial with the Father and the Son. . . . Power over life pertains to the Spirit, for being God he preserves creation in the Father through the Son.

298 Since God could create everything out of nothing, he can also, through the Holy Spirit, give spiritual life to sinners by creating a pure heart in them, and bodily life to the dead through the Resurrection. God "gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist." And since God was able to make light shine in darkness by his Word, he can also give the light of faith to those who do not yet know him. **299** Because God creates through wisdom, his creation is ordered: "You have arranged all things by measure and number and weight" [Wisdom 11:20]. The universe, created in and by the eternal Word, the "image of the invisible God", is destined for and addressed to man, himself created in the "image of God" and called to a personal relationship with God. Our human understanding, which shares in the light of the divine intellect, can understand what God tells us by means of his creation, though not without great effort and only in a spirit of humility and respect before the Creator and his work. Because creation comes forth from God's goodness, it shares in that goodness - "And God saw that it was good. . . very good"- for God willed creation as a gift addressed to man, an inheritance destined for and entrusted to him. On many occasions the Church has had to defend the goodness of creation, including that of the physical world.

372 Man and woman were made "for each other" - not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be "helpmate" to the other, for they are equal as persons ("bone of my bones. . .") and complementary as masculine and feminine. In marriage God unites them in such a way that, by forming "one flesh", they can transmit human life: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." By transmitting human life to their descendants, man and woman as spouses and parents cooperate in a unique way in the Creator's work.

373 In God's plan man and woman have the vocation of "subduing" the earth as stewards of God. This sovereignty is not to be an arbitrary and destructive domination. God calls man and woman, made in the image of the Creator "who loves everything that exists", to share in his providence toward other creatures; hence their responsibility for the world God has entrusted to them.

345 - 349 *The sabbath - the end of the work of the six days.* The sacred text says that "on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done", that the "heavens and the earth were finished", and that God "rested" on this day and sanctified and blessed it. These inspired words are rich in profitable instruction: In creation God laid a foundation and established laws that remain firm, on which the believer can rely with confidence, for they are the sign and pledge of the unshakeable faithfulness of God's covenant. For his part man must remain faithful to this foundation, and respect the laws which the Creator has written into it. Creation was fashioned with a view to the sabbath and therefore for the worship and adoration of God. Worship is inscribed in the order of creation. As the rule of St. Benedict says, nothing should take precedence over "the work of God", that is, solemn worship. This indicates the right order of human concerns. The sabbath is at the heart of Israel's law. To keep the commandments is to correspond to the wisdom and the will of God as expressed in his work of creation. *The eighth day.* But for us a new day has dawned: the day of Christ's Resurrection. The seventh day completes the first creation. The eighth day begins the new creation. Thus, the work of creation culminates in the greater work of redemption. The first creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new creation in Christ, the splendor of which surpasses that of the first creation.

397 Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.

400 The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject "to its bondage to decay". Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will "return to the ground", for out of it he was taken. *Death makes its entrance into human history.*

413 "God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. . . It was through the devil's envy that death entered the world" (*Wis 1:13; 2:24*).

414 Satan or the devil and the other demons are fallen angels who have freely refused to serve God and his plan. Their choice against God is definitive. They try to associate man in their revolt against God.

415 "Although set by God in a state of rectitude man, enticed by the evil one, abused his freedom at the very start of history. He lifted himself up against God, and sought to attain his goal apart from him".

416 By his sin Adam, as the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, not only for himself but for all human beings.

417 Adam and Eve transmitted to their descendants human nature wounded by their own first sin and hence deprived of original holiness and justice; this deprivation is called "original sin".

418 As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin (this inclination is called "concupiscence").

419 "We therefore hold, with the Council of Trent, that original sin is transmitted with human nature, "by propagation, not by imitation" and that it is. . . 'proper to each'".

420 The victory that Christ won over sin has given us greater blessings than those which sin had taken from us: "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (*Rom 5:20*).

421 Christians believe that "the world has been established and kept in being by the Creator's love; has fallen into slavery to sin but has been set free by Christ, crucified and risen to break the power of the evil one. . .".

