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LIVE JESUS IN OUR HEARTS

# THE PASCHAL MYSTERY AND THE GOSPELS

CHRIS WARDWELL

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High School Framework Course 3

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# Thanks and Dedication

Thanks to May Lane and Brian Singer-Towns for laughing at my jokes and patiently guiding my writing in the right direction.

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Love to my wife, Christine, who has generously supported my recent adventures, both in writing and otherwise. Love also to my son, Jacob.

This book is dedicated to Joe Zarantonello, who continues to guide me through my little mysteries and into the Great Mystery.

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# UNIT 1

## Old Testament: United with God, Separated by Sin

WHAT  
DIVIDED  
GOD AND  
HUMANITY?  
WHAT  
UNITED US  
AGAIN?

# LOOKING AHEAD

CHAPTER 1 Page 10  
God's Original Plan

CHAPTER 2 Page 40  
Bound to God: The Covenants

CHAPTER 3 Page 70  
Pointing toward Christ's Sacrifice

In my opinion, disobedience and lack of faith in God are what divided God and humanity. I think Adam and Eve's giving in to temptation is an example of humans' defying God's rules because we don't think of God as present to us. But Jesus walked among us and lived with us. Jesus' close relationship with God shows us how we can become one with God. We can be united with God by following Jesus—living humbly, valuing people over profits, and acting as peacemakers.

**COLIN**

Father Judge High School



# CHAPTER 1

## God's Original Plan

IF GOD MADE EVERYTHING GOOD, HOW DID THINGS GET SO BAD?

### SNAPSHOT

#### Article 1 Page 11

#### The Fullness of Creation

- Pre-read: Genesis, chapter 2

#### Article 2 Page 17

#### Creation Accounts: The Literary Form

#### Article 3 Page 22

#### You Can't Un-Ring That Bell

- Pre-read: Genesis, chapter 3

#### Article 4 Page 28

#### The Wages of Sin

#### Article 5 Page 33

#### The Cycle of Sin Begins

- Pre-read: Genesis 4:1–16
- Pre-read: Genesis 6:5–9:28
- Pre-read: Genesis 11:1–9

## Article 1

# The Fullness of Creation

Since the beginning of creation, God has planned for us to share eternal happiness with him through an intimate relationship of love. The disobedience of our first parents, however, disrupted this plan, and humanity's relationship with God has been wounded ever since. But God is ever faithful, and nothing can stand in the way of his love. The Bible's accounts reveal how throughout history, God has worked to bridge the gap that separates us. His saving plan is ultimately fulfilled through the Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ—the **Paschal Mystery**. To better understand the Paschal Mystery, let's start at the beginning: the Book of Genesis and the Creation accounts.

### TAKE IT TO GOD

God who created me,  
Help me to overcome the pressure of society  
and its “perfect” image of a person.  
Help me to accept myself as I am, despite my failings.  
May I become aware of just how wonderfully you made me;  
may I learn to live as the person you intend me to be.  
May I remember my goodness and the goodness of others,  
to accept others the way you accept me.  
Help me walk in your footsteps, which lead me to eternal life with you.  
Amen.

---

**Paschal Mystery** ► The work of salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ mainly through his Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

## Half Full or Half Empty?

Some would say that in general, there are two types of people. The first type sees life as a glass half full: life is full of beauty, goodness, joy, and love. When something bad happens, they look for something positive to take from it. The second type of person sees life as a glass half empty: life is full of disappointments, ugliness, prejudice, and division. When something good happens, they assume that something bad will soon follow.

Most of us probably see life somewhere between these two types, but we do tend to lean one way or the other. Which way do you lean? Which is the best way to see life and creation, glass half full or glass half empty?

The Creation accounts at the beginning of Genesis tell us that both views contain part of the truth. When we read them carefully, we understand that God created the world as a place of beauty, goodness, and love. However, human sin has marred God's intent and has brought ugliness, division, and hatred into the world. In this chapter we will explore this fundamental conflict and the deeper spiritual truths these accounts teach us.

## It's All Good

"Looks good to me." "Good to know." "Sounds good." "It's all good!" You've probably heard or used these or similar words at some point in your life. But have you ever considered how well these common phrases could be used to describe the first Creation account in the Bible? Think about it. Genesis 1:1–2:4 details the six days of God's work of Creation and its goodness.

This is one of the most fundamental truths taught in the Bible: the goodness of all creation reflects the goodness and glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The goodness and perfection of the garden reflected the goodness and perfection of Heaven. This state of perfection was short-lived because sin entered the world, beginning with Adam and Eve's disobedience. But all is far from lost, and we live in the hope of God's providence. For, "The universe was created 'in a state of journeying' toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC]*, number 302). It's all good!



The belief that creation is one way in which God connects Heaven and Earth is acknowledged in the Nicene Creed.

## Heavenly Life on Earth

Creation is certainly one way that God connects Heaven and Earth. But creation is not limited to what we can see, hear, taste, smell, and touch; it also includes everything in the universe that we *can't* see. This belief is acknowledged in the Nicene Creed: God created “all things visible and invisible,” in and on “heaven and earth.”

So, what are some of the things that fit into the “invisible” category? Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, and angels are “invisible” things. You may recall learning about Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory in a previous course, but what about angels?

**Angels** are spiritual creatures with intelligence and free will. The word *angel* means “messenger” and describes their role: angels are the servants and messengers of God. From preventing Abraham from sacrificing his son, Isaac, to announcing the coming of Christ to the Virgin Mary, Sacred Scripture records the active presence of angels in the lives of God’s people. We too can find the assistance of angels in our own lives! We can be comforted by the knowledge that “human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession”<sup>1</sup> (CCC, number 336).

---

**angel** ► Based on a Greek word meaning “messenger,” a personal and immortal creature with intelligence and free will who constantly glorifies God and serves as a messenger of God to humans to carry out God’s saving plan.



But Scripture also notes that not all angels were so . . . angelic. Saint Peter refers to a time when some angels disobeyed God (see 2 Peter 2:4). Like humans, angels have free will and were created good. By rejecting God, some of them became “fallen angels”; the most notable of these we call the **Devil** or **Satan**. Though fallen angels can and have negatively influenced humanity, they are still created beings, and have never had the infinite power that God has.

Another way God connects Heaven and Earth is through each of us! Every human being is a union of both the physical and the spiritual worlds. We are human, but we are made in the image and likeness of God. We are the summit of creation; that is, we are the only creatures on Earth that God has willed for our own sake.

It is important to note that it is not our physical appearance that “looks” like our Creator, but rather it is our soul that reflects God. For example, when we offer our lives in service to one another, we reflect God’s faithfulness and loving kindness. In these moments, we are given glimpses of heavenly life here on Earth. (This subject will be studied further in a later chapter.)



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The angel Gabriel brings a message to Mary from God, announcing that she will bear God's son through the Holy Spirit.

**Devil** ► From the Greek *diabolus*, meaning “slanderer” or “accuser”; refers in general to the fallen angels, those spiritual beings who sinned against God.

**Satan** ► The fallen angel or spirit of evil who is the enemy of God and a continuing instigator of temptation and sin in the world.

## One Body

God created Eve from the rib of Adam in the second Creation account, and the two of them became “one body” (Genesis 2:24). This symbolic account of Eve’s creation tells us that Adam and Eve were perfectly united before sin entered the world.

This passage reveals another fundamental spiritual truth: human beings are made for communion, that is, for intimate relationship. We see this most fully reflected in marriages. Consider the many ways in which a husband and wife become “one” after they get married. They are now one family and live in the same home. They are spiritually and legally bound to each other. They may share the same friends, bank accounts, and last name. Emotionally, they support each other. When one experiences joy or sadness, the other also feels its effects. Physically, their bodies become one in the sexual act of love, and their children are the physical manifestation of their love. Scientifically speaking, the characteristics of children are a result of the union of the DNA codes received from their parents.

Husband and wife become one through their deep mutual love, a love that mirrors the love God has for all his children. They know each other intimately and sometimes even finish each other’s sentences. Their selfless nature allows them to put the other’s wants and needs ahead of their own. A wholeness is created that could not have been made by either one of them alone. Their love steers them toward each other, guides their lives, strengthens their bond, and gives them the energy to share that love with others.



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As humans, we are social beings who are meant to be in relationship with one another.



## No Shame

There is another spiritual truth to observe about Adam's and Eve's original holiness before sin entered the world: Adam and Eve felt no shame even though they were both naked (see Genesis 2:25). Can you imagine walking around naked in public without frantically trying to find something to cover yourself? Besides protection from the physical elements and societal norms for decency, why do we feel the need to cover our private areas? At the beginning of his papacy, Pope Saint John Paul II (1920–2005) gave regular weekly talks about the human body and sexuality. Now called the **Theology of the Body**, these presentations offered some fascinating insights into the second Creation account and why Adam and Eve “felt no shame.”

Pope Saint John Paul II echoed the first Creation account when he emphasized that humans were made good—this includes every aspect of us, including our bodies. There was no shame before sin entered the world. And it was only after sin entered the world that lust became part of the human experience. Lust is selfish activity because it objectifies people. It sees others merely as a sexual object to be used for one's own pleasure. Now that lust was present, people needed to protect themselves from it. Pope Saint John Paul II identified shame as a type of fear (“General Audience,” December 19, 1979). Shame reflects the fear we have of people seeing us merely as an “object.” And when someone sees another person as an object to use, they take away that person's dignity.

Before sin, Adam and Eve felt no shame. They were not judging themselves or each other. They did not see each other as an object for their own pleasure. What a contrast to the pressures we often feel today!

We can get a glimpse of this acceptance of each other in the loving relationship of marriage. When a husband and wife know each other's value as a person, they feel safe. They do not feel shame around each other because they have fully given themselves to each other. In marriage they become “one body” united by love. ✨

**HMMMMMM...** What was it like to be human before sin?

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**Theology of the Body** ► The name given to Pope Saint John Paul II's teachings on the human body and sexuality.

## Article 2

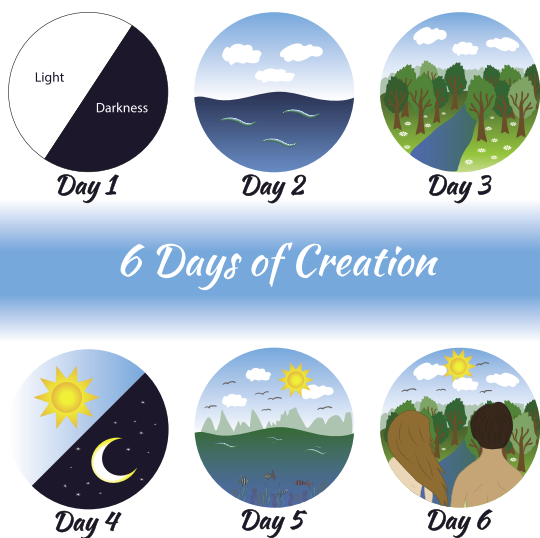
# Creation Accounts: The Literary Form

“Little pig, little pig, let me come in,” says the big bad wolf. The three little pigs respond, “Not by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin!” The wolf then warns, “Then I’ll huff, and I’ll puff, and I’ll blow your house in!”

Imagine someone responding to this fairy tale by saying: “That story never happened! You don’t really believe that, do you?! Pigs and wolves can’t even talk!” They would be completely missing the point, of course. A fairy tale is not intended to be a historically and scientifically accurate portrayal of reality. It is intended to express some sort of teaching or moral. For example, in *The Three Little Pigs*, the third little pig works all day building his home out of brick, while the other two quickly finish their houses so they can have fun. Although this isn’t a historically true story, it does teach the importance of investing time, resources, and hard work—a valuable truth in any day and age.

Similar criticism has been used to attack the two Creation accounts in the Book of Genesis. There are some who say: “Those stories aren’t true! The Earth took billions of years to form, not six days!” Unfortunately, like the critic of the fairy tale, they are also missing the point. Through the Bible, God communicates his revealed truth. The Bible conveys the truth, which “God wants to reveal through the sacred authors for our salvation” (CCC, number 137). In

some of the Bible’s writings, like the first eleven chapters of Genesis, this takes the form of figurative or symbolic stories. These first chapters of Genesis are primeval history, meaning they cover a time before humans kept a written record of the events in their lives. Like a fairy tale, these chapters are symbolic; unlike a fairy tale, they are rooted in historical reality. They reveal spiritual truths that complement the truth revealed through science and history. We know



The first Creation account in the Book of Genesis uses figurative language—six days of Creation—to teach the religious truth that God created everything.

that because these chapters are written in figurative language. Before we look at more Bible passages related to the Paschal Mystery, let's revisit some important understandings for interpreting the Bible.

## Figurative Language, Religious Truth

**Figurative language** is a literary form that uses symbolic images, stories, and names to point to a deeper truth. Figurative language can teach us religious truths, but it is not meant to be scientifically or historically accurate. For example, with the seven days of Creation, chapter 1 of Genesis uses figurative language to teach us an important religious truth: God created the world with order and purpose. We should not interpret this story to mean that God literally created the universe in six twenty-four-hour days. Nor should we interpret figurative language as pure fantasy; the first chapters of Genesis affirm real events that took place at the beginning of human history.

Another example of figurative language is in the second Creation account in Genesis, chapter 2: God places the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden. This is not an actual tree that exists in nature. "The 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil' symbolically evokes the insurmountable limits that man, being a creature, must freely recognize and respect with trust"<sup>2</sup> (CCC, number 396). Eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is how the human authors expressed humanity's entrance into sin. (Read more about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in article 3.)

Adam's and Eve's names are also symbolic elements in the second Creation account. Adam's name comes from the Hebrew word '*adam*' meaning "human being." God formed him from the ground ('*adama*' in Hebrew), so '*adam*' comes from the word '*adama*'. Although this is a play on words, it also symbolizes humanity's close relationship to, and reliance on, the Earth. In Hebrew, Eve's name (*hawwa*) is related to the Hebrew word for "living" (*hay*). Eve was given her name "because she was the mother of all the living" (Genesis 3:20).

It's important to remember that the biblical accounts are God's Word. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the human authors used their skills and talents to express these truths using the literary form of figurative language. The Creation accounts of Genesis uniquely express the truths that God wants us to know for our salvation. Among others, these truths include that there is only one God, that God is all-powerful, and that humans are given the gift of free will. Because these accounts are divinely inspired, we can count on the truth of these powerful stories!

---

**figurative language** ► A literary form that uses symbolic images, stories, and names to point to a deeper truth.



Though the author of the second Creation account refers to the convergence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers—shown in this modern-day map of Iraq—the Garden of Eden is not an actual place.

## The Garden: United with God

The Garden of Eden is another important symbolic element of the second Creation account. Eden is presented as God's home, and although Genesis locates it near some actual physical landmarks (the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers), it is not a place. Instead, the garden represents the paradise in which humanity was created, united with one another in God's presence.

In Eden, God formed man out of the ground, then planted a garden, put the man in the garden, and entrusted its care to him (see Genesis 2:15). We read that Adam and Eve “heard the sound of the LORD God walking about in the garden” (3:8). God was fully present to them and “from their friendship with God flowed the happiness of their existence in paradise” (CCC, number 384).

This was God's plan: humans, all of creation, and God, living in complete peace and harmony with one another. This is what is called the state of **original holiness** and **original justice**. God invited humanity “to intimate communion with himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice” (CCC, number 54). Knowing why God created us is important because it acts as the target on which we can focus our lives. Ultimately, our goal is to return to the garden: communion with God and with one another.



The second Creation account uses figurative language to symbolize the unity between Adam and Eve.

## Adam and Eve: United with Each Other

The second Creation account also uses figurative language to describe the unity between Adam and Eve. In this account, God creates Eve from Adam's rib (see Genesis 2:23). Even though Adam was created first and Eve was created as a “helper” to him (2:18), this should not be interpreted to mean that men are in some way superior, or that women should be subservient. On the contrary, though the account might reflect some of the cultural **patriarchy** of the time it was written, Catholic doctrine clearly states that men and women have been created “in perfect equality as human persons” (CCC, number 369).

Though both men and women are created in the image and likeness of God and are equal as persons, they are nonetheless different. This is also a good thing. The obvious sexual differences allow for the flourishing of married life and children. A man and a woman complement each other, each

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**original holiness** ► The original state of human beings in their relationship with God, sharing in the divine life in full communion with him.

**original justice** ► The original state of Adam and Eve before the Fall; sharing in the divine life, they were in a state of complete harmony with God, with themselves, with each other, and with all of creation.

**patriarchy** ► The familial, social, cultural, and political worldview that claims that men are destined to hold positions of power over, and make decisions for, women and children.

providing what the other does not have. What makes each of them distinct is exactly what allows them to “become one body” (2:24).

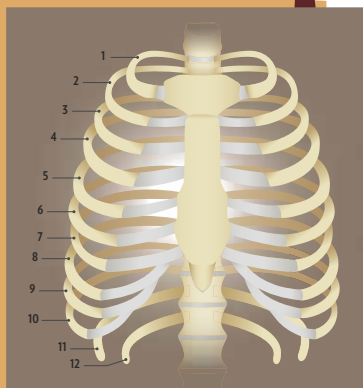
The human authors of the Bible expressed God’s truth using symbolic imagery and literary forms common to their time. The second Creation account of Genesis teaches us that God created us to be happy and to live united with him and with one another. Though each one of us is different, we were made to live in communion with one another. \*

## OVERVIEW of the Book of Genesis

- **Themes:** The goodness of creation, sin and its consequences, covenant, and bringing good out of evil.
- **Important people:** Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.



Do men have fewer ribs than women?  
Through the centuries, many people have concluded that because God took a rib from Adam to create Eve, men must have one fewer rib than women. Even if you accepted that this element of the account is included to explain why men have fewer ribs, you would be wrong. Men do indeed have twenty-four ribs—the same number that women do.



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# HMMMMM...

What does the second Creation account teach us about how God intended for us to live?

## Article 3

# You Can't Un-Ring That Bell

It was near the end of their senior year in high school, and Seth was furious at Ava. They had been dating for months, but Seth knew Ava had had a serious crush on Austin before their own romance started. Austin was the popular and burly football star who was recently awarded a scholarship to play at Notre Dame. Nonetheless, late in the summer before senior year, Seth slowly caught Ava's attention, and they soon started dating.

About two months before senior prom, Seth got a text from a friend who heard that Austin had asked Ava to the prom and she had said yes. Seth was enraged. How could she betray him like this? He called her right away (which was a mistake!). Before she even finished saying hello, Seth started yelling. He said every mean and insulting thing he could think of. When he finished, there was silence on the phone. Then Ava calmly said, "Yes, Austin did ask me to the prom, but I said no because I wanted to go with you." More silence. Seth had just finished hurling a barrage of insults at someone he loved, and it was all based on a rumor. Unfortunately, he could not un-ring that bell. He had said awful things to Ava that he could not take back. They worked it out and stayed together, but their relationship was forever changed: they recognized that neither one of them was perfect.

In Genesis, chapter 3, Adam and Eve also chose to believe a lie and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was a bell that humanity could not un-ring. They had crossed a line into a forbidden territory that profoundly affected their experience of the world; the way they related to God and to each other was forever changed.



Once Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, there was no turning back. They had already crossed the line into forbidden territory.



## Etiology, Another Literary Form

In the previous article, we learned about figurative language and its purpose in the first two chapters of Genesis. Before going further, let's look at another literary form that will help you better understand the Creation accounts and chapters 3–11 in the Book of Genesis.

The accounts in Genesis, chapters 3–11, use the literary form **etiology**. Etiology is the study of the origins or causes of things. For example, ancient cultures around the world have employed folk stories to explain all sorts of things, including death, geological landmarks, the origins of social or natural occurrences, the name of a place, and even why bears have such short tails.

The human authors of Genesis, chapters 1–11, also employed etiologies. They did this to answer perplexing questions about things like why animals exist, why women have pain in childbirth, and why snakes crawl on their bellies. The purpose of these was not to give a scientific or historical explanation.

Rather they are creative explanations used by the human authors to convey a religious truth that was inspired by the Holy Spirit: how sin leads to shame and how sin brings isolation, causes pain and suffering, disrupts our harmony with nature, and leads us away from God and life. This is what we'll explore in Genesis, chapter 3.

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Genesis, chapter 3, employs an etiology as to why snakes crawl on their bellies.

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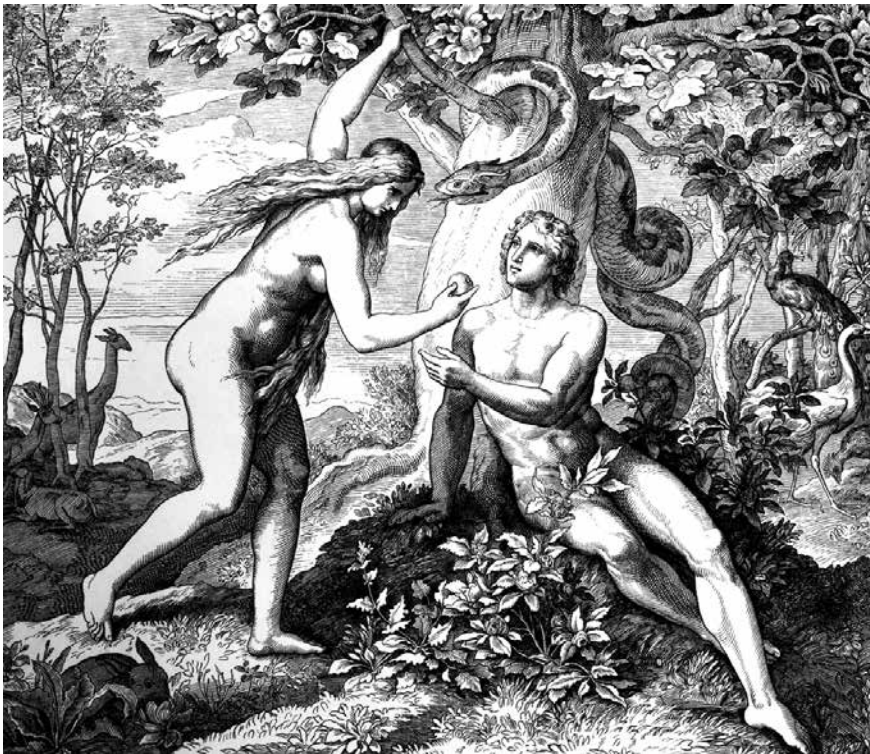
**etiology** ► A story that explains something's cause or origin.



## Knowing Good and Evil

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is first introduced in chapter 2 of Genesis, but it is not until chapter 3 that we learn its symbolic element. At the beginning of chapter 3, all is well in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve live a life of holiness and justice in communion with God. Everything in the garden is theirs with one exception: God tells them not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (see 2:16–17), for reasons the text does not fully explain.

But Adam and Eve are tempted by the serpent, and they eat the forbidden fruit. This event brings a most radical change—Adam and Eve fall into a state of sin which separates them from God and from each other. They immediately recognize their “nakedness,” brought on by their shame and feeling of separation. Then they hide from God (see 3:7–8). Now that they know good and evil (see 3:22), they have entered a world of judgment and separation, which keeps one thing from another.

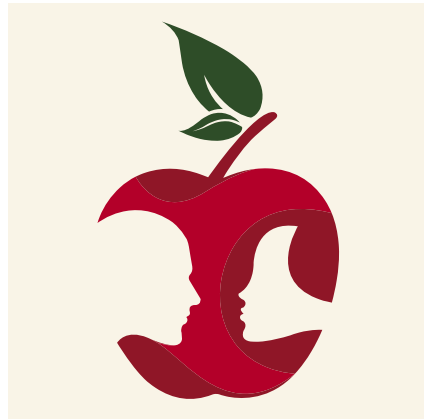


Why is it wrong for humans to separate from one another and from God? Acknowledging differences and separating things in our everyday experience is not necessarily bad. It is good to know right from wrong and to know that it is virtuous to help others and wrong to harm them. Actions have moral consequences, and it is important that we discern what is good from what is evil.

The problem comes when sin distorts our ability to see clearly. Sometimes we see the world through our small self-centered viewpoint. Sin causes us to focus on ourselves, making us feel better or more entitled, creating separations that can be destructive to our relationships with God and one another. For example, when we separate “good” people from “evil” people, we are deciding who is worthy of our attention and love. In some places, a judge and jury can even decide to take away someone’s life because of a crime someone committed. We take on the role of God by choosing who lives and who dies. Ironically, this makes us even less like God, for even the worst criminal is not beyond God’s love and compassion.

Eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolizes a major shift in the life of humanity. “The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place *at the beginning of the history of man*”<sup>3</sup> (CCC, number 390). Although we do not read chapter 3 as history, it does symbolize something that truly happened. Adam and Eve’s act represents the event when our earliest ancestors freely chose to disobey God’s Law, and humanity lost its original holiness and justice.

**Original Sin** is the sin of the first human beings who disobeyed God’s command by choosing to follow their own will. They lost their original holiness and became subject to death. Since then, we have suffered from its consequences.



Adam and Eve’s choice to eat the forbidden fruit represents the loss of humanity’s original holiness and justice.

**Original Sin** ► From the Latin *origo*, meaning “beginning” or “birth.” The term has two meanings: (1) the sin of the first human beings, who disobeyed God’s command by choosing to follow their own will and thus lost their original holiness and became subject to death, (2) the fallen state of human nature that affects every person born into the world, except Jesus and Mary.

## To See as God Sees

The Fall also illustrates the consequences of placing ourselves apart from God's will. Adam and Eve allowed themselves to be tempted by the serpent to disobey God and chose to place themselves outside of God's plan for them. Whenever we do this, there are consequences, sometimes very serious ones.

Despite the failure of our first parents, God still wants to share his divine life with us so much that he sent his Son, Jesus Christ. By becoming human, the Son of God reminds us that being human is good! The serpent lied to Adam and Eve, telling them they needed to be like gods. The irony is that the first Creation account tells us that Adam and Eve (and us) were already made in God's image and likeness!

Human beings have limitations. We live in a specific place and time and, far from being **omniscient**, our views are often tainted by a culture that is marked by sin. Knowing this, we should be always be cautious of believing we can come to the truth on our own power. We must accept the limitations of who we are as human beings and open ourselves to God's revealed truth, allowing God's grace to direct and fill our lives.

### CATHOLICS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Sr. Helen Prejean joined the Congregation of St. Joseph when she was just eighteen years old. After years of working in one of the poorest communities in New Orleans, her life took an unexpected turn after becoming pen pals with two men on Louisiana's death row. She soon became their spiritual director and journeyed with them all the way to their deaths in the electric chair. Her experiences are detailed in her bestselling book *Dead Man Walking* (Vintage, 1994), which eventually was made into an award-winning movie and an opera. Sister Helen has dedicated her life to ending the death penalty and embodies the belief that even for those who have committed terrible sins, nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).



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**omniscient** ▶ From the Latin *omnia*, meaning “all,” and *scientia*, meaning “knowledge.” Refers to the divine attribute that God is able to know everything, past, present, and future.

God can see the uniqueness of every single human being, yet this does not keep him from seeing all of us as a connected whole. For God, there is no conflict to see us both as many and as one. Saint Paul notes that God is able to overcome any separation that we have devised (see Romans 8:38–39). Though we might separate who is worthy and who is not, in God's eyes no one is beyond the reach of his love and compassion. We are called to see the world similarly.

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God can see the uniqueness of every human being and all of humanity as a connected whole.

Despite our limitations, we can rise above our sinful inheritance to share in the divine life that is offered to us. Although we will never be all-knowing, God continually invites us to see things his way and provides guidance for us. Jesus Christ bridges the chasm we created between God and humanity. His very being is the union of God and humanity, and in him we find a role model showing us how to live a good human life.

Saint Paul said, “Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). How do we do that? Love. Love is the key that heals the separation between God and us, and between us and one another. ✱

HMMMMM. . .

How did eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil change life for Adam and Eve?

## Article 4

# The Wages of Sin

Jacob was tired of his parents' constant nagging about doing his chores. Take out the trash, make his bed, wash the dishes, feed and give medicine to his dog, Atticus, and so on. If he was just an hour or so late in completing a chore, they jumped on him to do it right away. Jacob began to rebel in little ways. To speed up his morning routine, he sometimes skipped giving the dog his medicine. He had accidentally skipped it before, and it did not seem to make any difference. His parents never knew, so he figured it was no big deal.

Then one morning, Atticus was sick. He was sluggish and tired and did not want to eat. Jacob's parents thought maybe he had eaten something bad in the backyard, so they kept him inside as they all went off to work and school. When they came home, Atticus was worse. They rushed him to the vet, who discovered that Atticus's red blood cell count had dropped significantly, and he was near death. Because the medicine he was supposed to take was combatting a disease that caused his red blood cell count to drop, Jacob had to admit that he was not giving it to him regularly. In the end, Atticus survived and Jacob learned his lesson, but this situation reminded Jacob that failure to do the right thing can have serious consequences.

### CHEW ON THIS



“Adam, where are you?” This is the first question God asks man after his sin. “Adam, where are you?” Adam lost his bearings, his place in creation, because he thought he could be powerful, able to control everything, to be God. Harmony was lost; man erred and this error occurs over and over again also in relationships with others. “The other” is no longer a brother or sister to be loved, but

simply someone who disturbs my life and my comfort. . . . How many of us, myself included, have lost our bearings; we are no longer attentive to the world in which we live; we don't care; we don't protect what God created for everyone, and we end up unable even to care for one another! (Pope Francis, *The Works of Mercy*)

Not all sin leads to a physical death, but it certainly can slowly chip away at our spiritual life. **The Fall** from **Grace**, the biblical Revelation about the origins of sin and evil in the world, shows the consequences of our ancestors' sin. Saint Paul reminds us of the Genesis account when he writes, "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). A wage is a payment we receive for something we have done. Sin certainly pays, but the currency is death.

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Why do humans have to work to get food? Genesis, chapter 3, provides an etiology as to why.

**Fall, the** ➤ Also called the Fall from Grace, the biblical Revelation about the origins of sin and evil in the world, expressed figuratively in the account of Adam and Eve in Genesis.

**grace** ➤ The free and undeserved gift that God gives us to empower us to respond to his call and to live as his adopted sons and daughters. Grace restores our loving communion with the Holy Trinity, lost through sin.

## Original Sin

Original Sin refers to the sin of the first human beings who disobeyed God's command, and to the fallen state of human nature. Adam and Eve first rebelled against God, and since then, humanity has experienced the consequences. The first sin was the choice of a self-centered life over a God-centered life. "All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness" (CCC, number 397).

The original justice and holiness that characterized God's creation was lost. The grace of living fully in God's presence could no longer be experienced. Genesis, chapter 3, expresses this loss in the consequences that God pronounces at the end of the chapter. Consider Adam and Eve's life before and after the Fall:

Before the Fall	After the Fall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They lived in perfect union with God.</li> <li>• They were one body.</li> <li>• They felt no shame.</li> <li>• They lived in the garden.</li> <li>• They had access to the tree of life.</li> <li>• They lived in perfect peace and harmony.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They hid from God.</li> <li>• They realized they were naked (different).</li> <li>• They covered themselves with loincloths.</li> <li>• They were expelled from the garden.</li> <li>• They would die.</li> <li>• They lived with blame, conflict, and pain.</li> </ul>

The consequences of sin, humanity's loss of peace and harmony, are communicated through the etiological elements of the second Creation account. These etiologies offer folk-story-like explanations for natural phenomenon (for example, why snakes crawl on their bellies), but they also communicate the religious truths of the consequences of sin:

Etiology	Religious Truth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why humans wear clothing.</li> <li>• Why snakes are cursed among animals and must crawl on the ground.</li> <li>• Why women have pain in childbirth.</li> <li>• Why humans work to get food.</li> <li>• Why humans die.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sin leads to shame.</li> <li>• Sin brings isolation.</li> <li>• Sin causes pain and suffering.</li> <li>• Sin disrupts our harmony with nature.</li> <li>• Sin leads us away from God and life.</li> </ul>



## Death

Saint Paul writes, “Just as through one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all, inasmuch as all sinned” (Romans 5:12). The “one person” to whom Saint Paul is referring is our first human ancestor, Adam (and Eve). We might have an urge to blame Adam and Eve for the sins in the world, but recall that Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. By blaming them, we would just be continuing this blame game, avoiding our own responsibility. Yes, we were born and raised in a world tarnished by sin, but our sins are our own, and the consequences are the same: death and separation from God and one another.

When God told Adam that he should not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he warned Adam that he would die if he did so. This is true. Instead of living in harmony with God forever, Adam and Eve eventually physically died. But sin is responsible for more than just our physical death. The Church explains that “Adam’s sin . . . has transmitted to us a sin with which we are all born afflicted, a sin which is the ‘death of the soul’”<sup>4</sup> (CCC, number 403). In other words, we experience other types of death and loss due to sin, many of them spiritual in nature.

Sin separates and disrupts the harmony that God intended. Just as a physical death separates body and soul, a spiritual death separates us from God and one another. If you consistently mistreat your friend, she would probably no longer hang around you. Lying to family members can bring about a divisive atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion, which can tear apart the family bond. Racism continuously oppresses groups of people and causes harmful divisions within our society.



Sin is responsible for the separation and disruption of harmony that God originally intended for humanity.



## Why Did God Even Let It Happen?

Why evil existed in the first place is a mystery. There is no easy explanation. To gain any insight, we must look at the bigger picture and view the question within the entirety of our faith, including the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. “In time we can discover that God in his almighty providence can bring a good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures” (CCC, number 312).

God did not create evil and is not the cause of it. God created humans to love him and one another, and in order to love, we must have the capability to *choose* to love. If you program a robot to hand out food to those in need, the robot did not perform any acts of love. It is just a machine doing what it was programmed to do. Because we were made in God's image, we have the gift of free will. With free will, we have choices and options to do good or evil.

Even when we choose to do wrong, God can make something good come from it. This does not mean that doing something evil is okay, but rather that it can be an experience that we use to learn and grow closer to God and one another. If you have ever insulted or made fun of someone in public, you can see the hurt that it causes. Owning up to the pain you caused can make you a more respectful person in the long run. God never wills evil, but God can use our failures for good—much like fertilizer. Fertilizer is ugly, smelly, and un-

pleasant to work with, but when it is used in the right way, it can create growth and transform a barren place into a beautiful landscape. Although sin has caused unfathomable pain and suffering, it has also allowed us to experience the saving grace of God in his Son, Jesus Christ. ✱

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What have you learned, and how did you grow closer to God after you chose to do wrong?

**HMMMMM...**

In what way have you seen or experienced sin leading to separation between people, communities, or countries?

## Article 5

# The Cycle of Sin Begins

As we have learned, the origin of sin is dramatized in the account of Adam and Eve in Genesis, chapter 3, but the story does not end there. Their disobedient act against God sets in motion a cycle of sin. That cycle continues with their children, Cain and Abel, whose sinful inheritance leads to death. And that sinful inheritance, Original Sin, leads to **concupiscence**, the tendency of human beings to be attracted to sin.

## Cain and Abel: Our Inheritance

We find the influence of concupiscence in the account of Cain and Abel (see Genesis 4:1–16). Both brothers make offerings, but Cain becomes jealous of Abel, whose offering gains the Lord's favor. Overcome by this jealousy, Cain murders Abel. Beforehand, God tells Cain that “sin lies in wait at the door: its urge is for you, yet you can rule over it” (4:7). This “urge” is the result of concupiscence, and for Cain, it manifests itself as jealousy. The influence of concupiscence does not force Cain to commit this grave sin. God's encouragement to Cain is that he has a choice; he can “rule over it.” God has confidence in humanity's innate goodness to overcome temptation.

Because of Original Sin, we all suffer from concupiscence. Certainly, sinful behavior can be learned from others, but concupiscence is much more perplexing than this. Even if you could raise a child without the outside influence of any sinful viewpoint or behavior, the child would still suffer from concupiscence. Ultimately, “the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand” (CCC, number 404).



When Cain became jealous of his brother Abel, God told him that “sin lies in wait at the door: its urge is for you, yet you can rule over it” (Genesis 4:7). This is an example of God's confidence in humanity's ability to overcome temptation.

**concupiscence** ➤ The tendency of all human beings toward sin, as a result of Original Sin.



Racism is an example of communal sin because it results from the collective action of many people. It is up to the community to work together for its end.

In general, it is good to focus on the positive aspects of who we are and what we do. It is important to understand that all of us—without exception—are made in the divine image and are infinitely loved by God. Yet it would be wrong to ignore the source of pain and suffering in our world. Original Sin is not only the act committed by our earliest ancestors; it is also the fallen state into which every person who has ever lived on the planet is born, with the exception of Jesus and his mother, Mary. We are not guilty of our ancestors' personal sin, because we did not commit it. Nonetheless, we have contracted this sinful condition as a result of their sin. We would be foolish to ignore its influence.

## MAKE IT SO

It is important to honor and respect parents, teachers, church and civic leaders, and other authorities, but it is also necessary to admit that no one is perfect. Even the best of people in authority can teach sinful viewpoints or habits. Although we maintain respect for their authority, we must measure their morals and deeds against the teachings of Jesus. What have they taught us that fits with Christ's mandate to love our enemies? Do they avoid greed, pride, and envy? How have they influenced us to become more Christlike? It is good to reflect on how those in a position of authority have influenced our own thinking and behavior. Hopefully you will discover that they have been wonderful teachers. And if not, you can learn from that too.

## Noah and the Flood: Communal Sin

We tend to think of sin in personal terms because it makes sense that a person can only be responsible for what he or she does. What others do is their own choice. Yet there are sinful situations for which entire communities can be held accountable. These can come in the form of a nation's laws. Slavery and the Jim Crow laws which oppressed African-Americans in the United States are examples of communal sin. Even if an individual were against these laws, each member of the community is responsible for working toward their end. Pollution and other environmental problems are also examples of communal sin because they resulted from the collective actions of many people.

Communal sin is addressed in the account of Noah and the Great Flood (see Genesis 6:5–9:28). Sin had become such a deeply rooted part of society that God dealt with the people as a whole. Only Noah and his family were spared.

To address humanity's sin, this prehistoric account uses a powerful symbol that is common to literature from diverse times and cultures: water. Water is life. We drink it, wash with it, play in it, and fish in it, and over half of the human body consists of H<sub>2</sub>O. Though it certainly represents life, water is also a symbol of death. Water is one of the most destructive forces on Earth: it carves out rivers through the landscape; heavy rainfall can create floods that destroy our homes and towns; earthquakes send tsunamis that leave miles of devastation and kill thousands of people. We can find water's symbolism of life and death expressed in the liturgy of the Easter Vigil when the celebrant blesses the baptismal water and says:

The waters of the great flood  
you made a sign of the waters of Baptism,  
that make an end of sin and a new beginning of goodness.<sup>5</sup>  
(CCC, number 1219)

The Great Flood prefigures Christ's Baptism that washes away Original Sin. This is why we baptize children as infants. It is not because they have committed any sin personally but because they were born wounded by Original Sin. Baptism does not cure concupiscence, but it does impart "the life of Christ's grace, erases original sin and turns a man back toward God" (CCC, number 405). We are strengthened by God through the sacraments and the Church to resist sin and to do God's will.



Water represents both life and death and is a common symbol found in literature from diverse times and cultures. The account of Noah and the Flood uses water as the means by which God cleanses the Earth of sin.

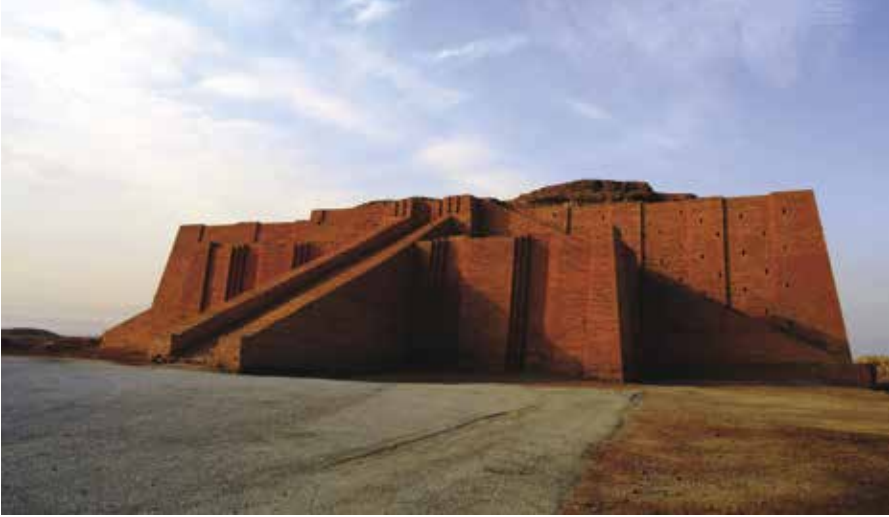
## Déjà Vu: The Tower of Babel

The Tower of Babel (see Genesis 11:1–9) repeats the themes we found in the account of Adam and Eve’s sin. The people all over the world live together, and they speak the same language. Like Adam and Eve, they rebel against their human limitations and try to be like God by building a tower to the sky—the place where they believe God resides. They are “united only in [their] perverse ambition to forge [their] own unity”<sup>6</sup> (*CCC*, number 57). Their consequences are also described in the form of etiologies. For example, God scatters them and confuses their language to thwart their ambition and establish the cultural diversity God chooses to work through.

So why would the human authors include this account if they are just repeating the same theme as the stories about Cain and Abel and the Flood? This repetition is no accident. The inclusion of this account shows us that the cycle of sin that began with Adam and Eve is repeated by humanity over and over again. Marked by Original Sin and its accompanying tendency toward evil, humanity’s descent into the depths of sin recurs age after age.

But God does not simply leave us to suffer the consequences without any assistance. He repeatedly sends us angels and prophets to speak his Word. He establishes covenants and provides laws to guide us. Ultimately, he sends his Son, Jesus Christ, to reunite God and humanity and show us how to live the life that we were created for: to love God and one another. ✨

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The Tower of Babel account shows us that the cycle of sin begun with Adam and Eve continues. The tower itself is most likely modeled after the ziggurat. Pictured here is a restored ziggurat, once a Sumerian temple, in ancient Ur, Iraq.

**HMMMMM...**

How does the cycle of sin described in the Book of Genesis continue today?



1. What does it mean to say that a husband and wife become “one body” (Genesis 2:24)?
2. Explain what Pope Saint John Paul II meant when he said that married couples feel no shame, like Adam and Eve before the Fall.
3. What do we mean when we say the two Creation accounts in Genesis use figurative or symbolic language?
4. What does eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolize?
5. What are etiologies, and how are they used in Genesis to explain the consequences of sin?
6. Explain this statement from Saint Paul: “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).
7. Explain concupiscence using the account of Cain and Abel.
8. What is communal sin? Explain how the account of Noah and the Flood is an example of communal sin.





## ART STUDY

### THE CYCLE OF SIN

1. In this painting by William-Adolphe Bougeureau, called *The First Mourning*, Adam and Eve have found the body of their dead son, Abel. Why do you think Adam is holding his left hand over the left side of his body?
2. Consider the way the artist has depicted Adam and Eve. What feelings are portrayed? What is the artist trying to communicate?
3. How does the background scenery give us a clue as to what the future will be like now that violence and murder have entered human history?





Live, Jesus, in our hearts . . . forever!

—Saint John Baptist de La Salle



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