

# The Greatest Story Ever Told

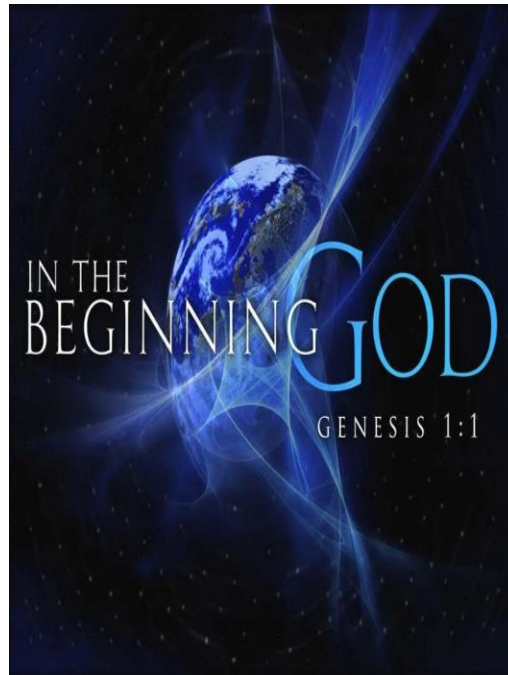
## A Back-to-Basics Catechesis

The greatest story ever told is the great drama of God with His people. It begins with the simple but awesome words, “*In the beginning God...*” (Gen 1:1). That is to say, in the beginning, before anything ever was, God IS. He has always been, He always will be, and He is the very act of being itself! Everything else that “is” or has being, takes its existence and is sustained by Him. We are not living in a machine. Creation is a loving work and revelation of God. St. Paul says of this creation, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from His workmanship” (Rom 1:20). Yes, even before the Bible we have the “book of creation” that teaches us of God’s wisdom, His order, His design, His purposes and His eternal law. All things work together in a wondrous harmony and synchrony. Above us the stars and planets, the sun and moon set forth a clock-like precision and a glorious song:

*Though they in solemn silence, all  
Move round our dark terrestrial ball.  
In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice,  
Forever singing, as they shine,  
The Hand that made us is Divine!*

Yes, the hand that made all is Divine! And God did not make us because He was lonely. Creation is an act of pure love. It is the nature of love to be effusive, that is, to pour itself out in generous sharing. God bestows His power, His existence, His life and order on all things in many and different ways. There are flowers with delicate beauty, Mountains with craggy grandeur. There is the vast cosmos beyond telling, and tiny, hidden worlds in a mere drop of

water. There are fabulous things that we see, and even more glorious things that are unseen.



An old hymn says,

*This earth, with its store  
of wonders untold,  
Thy power O God  
hath founded of old;  
Established it fast  
by a changeless decree,  
And round it hath cast,  
like a mantle, the sea.*

*Thy bountiful care,  
What tongue can recite?  
It breathes in the air,  
it shines in the light.  
It streams from the hills,  
it descends to the plain,  
And sweetly distills  
in the dew and the rain.*

Yes, God has done all things well. In the beginning, God!



### The Story of Creation

The story of creation is wonderfully described in the opening chapters of Genesis (a word which means “beginnings”). Many debate today if Genesis is a literal account which describes with scientific precision what happened, or if it is a more poetic account using allegory and symbol. The Catholic answer to this is generally a moderate approach. What we are surely taught is that God, by a sovereign and loving act made everything out of nothing. He did so in an orderly way and oversaw every detail. He continues to maintain and sustain every aspect of creation from its grandest glory to its most hidden minutia. Every mighty galaxy rolls through space by His power, every hair of our head is numbered. Further, we are instructed by the Church to safely hold that Adam and Eve are historical figures, actual persons directly created by God. They are not symbolic figures merely representing “mankind.” They are indeed our actual parents from whom all human beings descend. (see: *Humani Generis*, 37, Catechism #s 359, 371, 375, 388, 402, 404, 417).

In the Book of Genesis God creates all things by “speaking” them into existence. When God says, “Let there be light,” there is light! The New Testament clarifies and elaborates this when it teaches us that the Word through whom God the Father creates all things is His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ who is also the Word made Flesh (see John 1:1,3, 14). The Letter to the Colossians says, “All things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” (Col 1:16-17) The Gospel of John echoes: “Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made

that has been made.” (Jn 1:3) So, the Father created all things, but always with and through His Son, Jesus, both of them working in the unity of their Love who is the Holy Spirit.

The “days” of creation may not be literal days of 24 hours. Though one is free to hold this, Catholics are also free to hold that these days represent epochs or periods of time longer than an earth-day. It will be noted that the sun and moon, which clock our days here on earth, were not created until the fourth day. Whatever the case we have a beautiful description of what God does in the Biblical accounts of Genesis 1 and 2.

In a poetic sort of way God goes about creating certain “canvases” first and then paints in the details, by creating them.

**On the first day** God begins by creating a canvas of light and darkness and separating them.

**On the second day**, God creates the canvas of the “sky” and separates the heavens from the earth.

**On the third day**, God creates the canvas of the sea, separating it from the dry land.

On these canvases of the earth, the sea and the sky, God now “paints in the details.” He begins with the earth, creating vegetation of all kinds (also day three).

**On the fourth day** God turns to the canvas of the Sky creating the Sun, the moon and the stars.

**On the fifth day** God turns to the canvas of the sea creating all the sea creatures of every kind. He turns back to the sky and creates the birds.

**On the sixth day** God turns to the canvas of the earth and creates every beast of the earth, wild and tame, each according to its kind. And then, as the pinnacle of His earthly creation, he

made Adam and Eve and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it.

**On the seventh day** God rested and looking upon all He had made and pronounced it all to be very good.

### **A Doxology for God’s Creation from Scripture:**

*How beautiful are all God’s works, delightful to gaze upon and a joy to behold! All of them differ, one from another; yet none of them has He made in vain; For each in turn, as it comes, is good; can one ever see enough of their splendor?*

*The beauty of the celestial height and the pure firmament, heaven itself manifests its glory. The sun at its rising shines at its fullest, a wonderful instrument, the work of the Most High! Great indeed is the LORD who made it, at whose orders it urges on its steeds. It is the moon that marks the changing seasons, governing the times, their lasting sign The beauty of the heavens and the glory of the stars, a shining ornament in the heights of God. Now, behold the rainbow! Then bless its Maker,*

*The thunders of His voice make the earth writhe; by His power He shakes the mountains. A word from Him drives on the winds, whirlwind, hurricane, and storm winds. He makes the snow fly like birds; Its shining whiteness blinds the eyes; the mind is baffled at its steady fall.*

*Those who go down to the sea recount its extent, and when we hear them, we are awestruck; In it are His creatures, stupendous, amazing, all kinds of life, and the monsters of the deep.*

*Lift up your voices to glorify the LORD as much as you can, for there is still more. Beyond these, many things lie hidden; only a few of His works have we seen. (Sirach 42-43 selected verses).*

### **A Summons to Wonder and Awe**

And so, as we see, God did a wonderful thing and set forth all creation well. For us there remains a summons to wonder and awe. Too often today, many fail to revere the mystery of all things and the glory of all things great and small. We reduce and simplify the glory and intricacy of creation and think that, because we know some things, we know all things. We do not. Indeed, the more we learn, the more we discover what we do not know. As St. Paul observed, knowledge puffs us, but love builds up. Ask the Lord for an increase in love for Him and what He has done. Ask also for humility and awe as well as the mystical vision that faith supplies. Creation is no mere machine or physical reality. It is a revelation of God himself who made it. Be amazed and humbled at the love He shows in His extravagant creation. He did not create because He was lonely or bored. He created all things purely out of the extravagance of His love and wanted to share His glory and His gifts with all creation, especially us. Yes, be amazed and deeply grateful.

### **In the beginning God...**

The greatest story ever told begins with creation, a creation God called “very good.” (Gen 1:31) Sadly, things go awry due to human sinfulness. A drama of good and evil is introduced into the beautiful stage of creation. Future flyers will detail this. But through it all, do not forget that what makes this the greatest story ever told is that God never gives up on us. He is faithful, even when we are unfaithful, He loves even when we hate. The greatest story ever told is a love story, a love that never fails. Prepare your hearts for a story of unrelenting love even in the face of human sinfulness. And always remember, God can make a way out of no way.