

## CHAPTER ONE

# The Gift of Creation

*"In the beginning, God created . . ."*

— Genesis 1:1

## Objectives

- To nurture the children's natural sense of awe and curiosity in the beauty of creation all around us.
- To reflect with children on creation not as an event fixed in the past but as an ongoing event here and now.
- To explore with children ways to take care of and thank God for the gift of creation.
- To help children see that in our Eucharist we thank and praise God for all creation — for the world, for each other, and especially for the gift of Jesus.

*Note: The spiritual life of children is an innate quality of humans. It is described by some as "relational consciousness": that is, the natural capacity of the child to see himself or herself in relationship to one's self, to others, to creation, and to God (someone/something beyond). Throughout this program we want to nurture and deepen the child's innate consciousness and sensitivity to the life of the Spirit both within and around each of us.*

## Starting Activity

- Materials: — colored pens or crayons  
— a piece of paper or card with a drawing of a world and headed,  
*"This is our world and I love it."*
- Give the children the picture to color and decorate.

### Discussion Framework

1. Naming the gift.
2. Our experience of the gift.
3. We thank God for the gift.
4. We share the gift with others.
5. We celebrate the gift.

Notes:



## Friendship & Prayer Circle

- Move away from the table and form a small circle, preferably on the floor. Display the Bible there, open, facing the children.
- Ask the children to show their pictures. Say something positive about each one. Tell the children that at the end of the session they can take their pictures home and display them. This will remind their families to thank God for the gift of creation.



Tell the children that we are now going to listen to the creation story from the Bible. (Have a copy of the version below in the Bible.) You might say to the children: "The Bible is the book of God's word; when we listen to God's word, we want to be very quiet so that we can hear what God wants to say to us." Carefully light a candle and pause; then reverently take the Bible and read the story.

*This story is from the Book of Genesis.*

**IN the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Darkness was everywhere. The earth had no shape. There were no sounds. Just silence.**

**Then God breathed out over the stillness of the deep. And God began to speak.**

**"Let there be light!" God said. And there was light! God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light *day*. God called the darkness *night*.**

**Then God said, "Let all the waters flow into separate places with dry land in between." The waters obeyed and the land rose up into mountains and valleys.**

**God called the dry land *earth*. God called the water *seas*. God called the open space around it all the *sky*.**

**"Let there be a two great lights in the sky," God said. "Let the greater light rule the day. Let the lesser lights rule the night."**

Notes:

**Then God said, "Let the land be watered and grow with plants and flowers. Let great trees grow with fruit that have many kinds of seeds."**

**And it all began to happen. The world grew with endless life. When God spoke, it came to be.**

**"Let birds fly and soar in the sky," God said. And it happened.**

**"Let the land be filled with creatures — some that walk, some that crawl," God said. And it happened.**

**"Let the waters come alive with fish that swim and glide through the sea," God said. And it all came to be.**

**And God said, "This is good!"**

**Then God said, "Let us make man and woman. Let us make them in our own image." So God made the first man and woman — each one in God's own likeness. And there came to be many different kinds of people, each breathing the breath of God's own life!**

**So to this day, the breath of God's life and love moves in us and through creation like a gentle breeze. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the work of God's heart and hands is the work of our hearts and hands.**

**And God said, "This is very good!"**

**Then God rested. It was the seventh day.** *(Adapted from the Book of Genesis.)*

**Catechist: The Word of the Lord.**

**All: Thanks be to God.**

• After the reading, you might need to explain the response to the reading. We praise and give thanks to God for talking with us and loving us. After the children's response, place the Bible back, opened toward the children. We want to make this experience prayerful, like the celebration of the Word at the Eucharist.

*Notes:*

• Reflect on the story. Again, we suggest that you follow a simple three-step *inquiry process* that engages the children's imagination and taps into the child's innate sense of wonder and experience of God's presence in their lives.

- *Step one:* Ask open-ended questions — to which there is no right or wrong answer — that draw the children into the biblical story.
- *Step two:* Ask open-ended questions that look out of the story at the child's experience in the world today.
- *Step three:* Ask open-ended questions that explore how we might respond to what we have heard God say to us in the story and in our experience. As we follow this process, we want to engage the children in a dialog with God and God's word, not with us. We are servants of the Word. We should facilitate a conversation between the children and God.



• *Step One:* Here are some *suggested* open-ended questions that engage the child in the story and not intended to be used one after the other.

— What did we hear God say to us?

— I wonder what this story tells us about God.

— I wonder why God made light. So many trees and plants. So many fish and animals.

— I wonder what did God see that was so good?

— I wonder how was it possible for God to make planet Earth and all the mountains and seas? And all the many galaxies!

— God said, "Let there be light" and light happened! I wonder how it is possible for God just to say something and it happens! I wonder if that's the way things keep happening, by God saying each thing, calling each thing by its name, and — it happens!



• *Step Two:* After engaging the children in the story, continue to ask open-ended questions that look out of the story and at the children's experience today. Suggestions:

— What is it like for you to walk under trees, to smell flowers, to watch the clouds, to look at the sky at night?

— What is it like for you to walk and run and play in God's world? What might God be saying to you?

— I wonder how many different animals have we seen? How many different birds? Different fish?

— I wonder what it is like for you to look out over the sea, or to stand by a great river. Or to ride on the waves!

*Notes:*

— How many different wonders of God's world can we find in our grocery stores? Gardens and yards? In our homes?



• *Step Three:* Ask open-ended questions that engage the children in responding to God's Word. Suggestions:

— I wonder what we might say to God when we see the stars at night. Or watch a tiny ant carry a heavy crumb away. Or a squirrel scamper up a tree.

— I wonder what God might be asking us to do when we see a new plant coming up from the ground. Or when we see flowers that need watering.

— I wonder how many different ways we can think of to help take care of God's creation.

— I wonder what God might be asking us to do when we see a dog or kitten that is lost.

— I wonder what God is asking us to do when we see or hear about someone who is hungry. Or has no place to live.

— Imagine you are God and you see someone wasting food or destroying a woods or something you had made for everyone to use and to enjoy. What would you ask that person to do?

— I wonder how many different ways we can tell God "Thank you!" and show God we are grateful for all of the wonders of God's world.

*Note: This inquiry process provides a way of having the children lead us into their perceptions of their relationship with God. It helps us to respect the child's original experience of God, and to avoid controlling the children's response to God's Word by our focusing only on what we want to hear from the children. In this way we facilitate the child's exploration of his or her relationship with God rather than simply try to teach the child "about God." By following this process, we are also helping the children to develop the skills of reflecting on their experience in light of God's Word.*



• Tell the children that we celebrate the gift of life — the gift of creation — in the Eucharist. We give thanks and praise to God by listening to God's Word and making what God says happen in our lives. We protect the beauty of the world, the people in it, and the life we share. Then we gather around the Lord's Table to be nourished by the Bread of creation, Jesus.

• Remind the children that in our Eucharist we bring gifts from God's earth — bread and wine — to the Lord's Table during the Offertory Procession. Through the power of the Spirit of Creation, these gifts of the earth become the gift of God's own personal life in Jesus. And the story of creation continues in us when we eat the Bread of Life and God's Word becomes flesh in us.

Notes:

• Ask the children if they could bring one item of food when they come to Mass to celebrate the "Gift of Creation." We bring these gifts to the altar to show that we want to thank God for the gifts of creation by sharing them with others. Explain that they will bring these gifts forward during the Offertory Procession. After Mass the gifts will be given to people who do not have enough money to buy food for themselves.



• Invite the children to hold hands, then to close their eyes and imagine the many wonderful things that make up our world. Then pray:

**GOD, our Creator, we thank you  
for the world, and all the wonderful  
plants, animals and people  
that live in it.**

*Child: Thank you, God, for the gift of  
\_\_\_\_\_. (Each child in turn names one thing to  
thank God for.)*

**All: God, our Creator, help us  
to take care of your wonderful world.**

• Move back to the table for the activity.



## Activity

Choose one or more of the following activities.

### 1. DISPLAY BOARD

#### *Option One:*

• Materials: — line drawings of animals, butterflies, birds, fish; moon, stars, sun, clouds, lightning, rain; trees, flowers, mountains, shells, starfish, octopus, etc.

— display board with the heading:

*"Thank you, God, for the Gift of Creation."*

— colored pens, paste, scissors

Notes:

- Invite each child to choose a shape, then color and cut it out with scissors.
- Each child's work is then mounted on the board. Have a couple of catechists responsible for helping the children mount their pictures.
- When the board is finished, the top third should be covered with "sky" pictures, the middle with "land" pictures, and the bottom with "sea" pictures.

### Option Two:

- Heading: — *"God has filled our world with lots of exciting foods."*  
And at the bottom of the board,  
*"There is plenty of food for everyone if we share it."*
- Materials: — display board  
— drawings of fruit, bread, cakes, rice, vegetables, to color and decorate  
— pictures of food from magazines, newspapers, advertising  
— colored pens, paste, scissors
- Invite each child to choose a picture. Decorate or color it, if necessary, and then cut it out.
- Each child's work is then mounted on the board. Have a couple of catechists responsible for helping the children mount their pictures.
- The board should be a "riot" of color and variety, showing as many food-stuffs as possible.



## 2. FRIEZE

- Materials: — roll of paper about eight inches deep; long enough to go around the church, or down one side  
— scissors, colored pens, paste  
— several copies of the following phrases written in **bubble-writing** one to two inches high:  
*"Thank you, God, for the Gift of Creation."*  
*"God has created a wonderful world."*  
*"Let's take care of God's world."*  
— line drawings of animals, birds, fish, butterflies; moon, stars, sun, rain, clouds, lightening; trees, flowers, mountains, etc.  
— pictures of all kinds of birds, fish, animals, people (from magazines and newspapers)

Notes:

- Invite the children to select some shapes and color them, or to cut out pictures from magazines. Some children can color in the **bubble-writing**.
- Roll out the frieze paper onto the floor and help the children mount their work. Remember to place everything in the frieze the same way up!



## 3. TREE OF LIFE

- Materials: — a small tree, or dried branches arranged in a pot to resemble a tree  
— circles of blue card or paper; a rainbow drawn across the top of the circle; writing around the bottom edge:  
*"Thank you, God, for the Gift of Creation."*  
— colored pens, hole punch, string or thread
- Invite the children to color the rainbow and draw a creation picture. They could choose one item, such as a favorite animal, flower or food. Or they may prefer to draw a creation scene, such as mountains, rivers, the seaside, a garden, the sky at night or day.
- Punch a hole in the top of the card and help the children make a loop from the thread, putting it through the hole so the card may be hung.
- The cards can be hung on the "Tree of Life" during the session. Or, ask the children to place their cards in a basket. One child could bring the basket of cards forward during the Offertory Procession as the other children bring forward their gifts of food. The cards can be hung on the tree after Mass.



## 4. ROLE PLAY

- Materials: — colored paper, scissors, tape, safety pins, paper plates, face paints, string
- Ask the children to think about the creation story that was read to them. Tell them that we are all going to become different gifts of creation, and we are going to use the materials available to do that.
- The children could use the paper plates to make animal masks, or use the face paints. The colored paper could be used to make leaves, flowers, butterflies, stars, and so forth. Use tape or pins to attach items to the children's clothes. The idea is to keep it fairly simple so that it can be managed easily in the time available.
- As soon as the children are ready, invite them to come into the center of the room and sit on the floor. One of the catechists reads the creation story as the children "come to life" when their role is mentioned in the story.

Notes:

- Alternatively, the class could form groups, each depicting a different aspect of the creation story: one group could be animals, another trees and plants, another sun and moon and stars, and so forth. When the children come together, each group acts out their own part of the story.
- If parents meet at the same time as the children, they could be invited to this dramatic presentation of the reading.



## Remind the Children

- Remind the children that they should now begin work at home on the chapter called “The Gift of Creation” in their *Children’s Workbook*.
- Tell the children that they are going to be a special part of the Mass on \_\_\_\_\_ (give date and time) to celebrate “The Gift of Creation.”
- Give each child a slip of paper to take home to their parents with the date and time of the Mass, *and that each child should bring one item of food.*



## Song

- See page 150. One of these songs, or a similar song, may be used to close today’s session.



## Eucharist

— Celebrating The Gift of Creation —

- The banners or frieze should be in place. Make sure there are baskets or trays available for the gifts of food.
- **WELCOME** — The celebrant or one of the catechists should welcome the families of the children who will be receiving first communion, describing what this celebration will include. A brief explanation of what the children have been learning could be given, and how the gift of creation will be highlighted during this celebration.

Notes:

- Explain that the children have been invited to bring gifts of food. These will be brought forward during the Offertory Procession and then distributed to the poor and homeless after Mass (or donated to a soup kitchen). The parents could be involved in the distribution. We share the fruits of creation in this way because God wants all of us to share in the gifts of creation; in this way we give thanks and praise to God.
- After the Prayer of the Faithful, the children go to the back of the church with their gifts. The catechist leads them up the center aisle. The children place their gifts on the tray or in the basket in front of the altar. A few parents could bring forward the communion gifts.
- The children could then remain standing around the altar for the Eucharistic Prayer, our prayer of praise and thanksgiving. The children would then return to their places at the Sign of Peace while sharing this sign with the assembly as they go.



Notes:

*WE LISTEN AND RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD.*

**THE WORLD TELLS  
THE STORY & GLORY OF GOD!**

**By** \_\_\_\_\_

*This is how I have felt the glory and wonder of God with me in creation.*

**Notes:**