

My Catholic Faith! Study Group

Session 2 - God and His Creation

Pre-meeting Prep

Participants should be asked to read Chapter Two of the *My Catholic Faith!* book prior to this meeting.

5 minutes - Gather

Snacks and informal social time as people gather. Try to be punctual and gather everyone together no longer than 5 minutes after the scheduled starting time.

5 minutes - Opening prayer and Scripture

Everyone sits quietly as the leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and then invites a period of silence in the following way:

Let us quiet ourselves as we begin this study of our glorious Catholic faith together. "Lord, as we sit here for a minute in silence, help each one of us to bring our own questions, concerns, fears, and joys to You. Help us, in this moment of silence, to be attentive to Your gentle voice speaking to us, directing us, and calling us to a deeper faith."

Take about a minute in silence with eyes closed so that each person can speak to our Lord about their own particular cares and concerns.

Leader reads the following invitation: ***Let us ponder the Word of God. Let us reflect upon our own faith journey with the following questions: Do I believe? How deep is my faith? Am I open to letting God speak to me? Am I open to the Word of God and willing to let God's truth sink in more deeply? Am I willing to let this new faith change my life?***

The leader of the session prayerfully reads the following Scriptures, one at a time, pausing for about 30 seconds between each verse:

Deuteronomy 6:45: Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Exodus 3:13-15: Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you', and they ask me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'. . . this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

Philippians 2:10-11: ...at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Maccabees 7:21-22, 28: I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws. . . Look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. Thus also mankind comes into being.

(optional) Romans 5:12-19: Therefore, just as through one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all, inasmuch as all sinned for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law. But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come. But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by that one person's transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one person Jesus Christ overflow for the many. And the gift is not like the result of the one person's sinning. For after one sin there was the judgment that brought condemnation; but the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal. For if, by the transgression of one person, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ. In conclusion, just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so through one righteous act acquittal and life came to all. For just as through the disobedience of one person the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one the many will be made righteous.

Leader then says: ***Let us take a moment in silence reflecting upon these words.*** (a minute of silence)

The leader then prays the following prayer from Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity: ***O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me forget myself entirely so to establish myself in you, unmovable and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity. May nothing be able to trouble my peace or make me leave you, O my unchanging God, but may each minute bring me more deeply into your mystery! Grant my soul peace. Make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling and the place of your rest. May I never abandon you there, but may I be there, whole and entire, completely vigilant in my faith, entirely adoring, and wholly given over to your creative action.***

The prayer time concludes with everyone professing the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

45-50 minutes - Discussion questions

Each person should be invited to share something or ask a question, if he/she chooses, regarding the questions/discussion starters below. Go through one question at a time, and give each person an opportunity to say something if he/she chooses. Avoid having one or two persons dominate the discussion. Go around the circle and do not be afraid to share! Your insights might assist someone else in their understanding of the topics. Your question might very well be the same question that someone else has. Some of the questions below will invite a personal sharing; other questions will invite you to share with others what you read in Chapter Two. The goal is to share personally and to also make sure that the faith of our Church is clearly expressed and understood by all.

1. In your own words, describe how God can be both One and Three at the same time.
2. How is God described as a divine family?
3. God's name is "I AM WHO I AM." What does this mean? Why is this His name? Dig deep in your discussion.
4. The Catechism states, "*By calling God "Father", the language of faith indicates two main things*" (discuss what each means below):
 1. *That God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority;*
 2. *That He is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. #239.*
5. Why is God not referred to as "Mother?" Does God still have motherly qualities? Is it proper to attribute motherly qualities to God? Why or why not?
6. God is the Almighty. Is there anything that God cannot do? Is there anything beyond His almighty power?
7. Why doesn't God stop all suffering in the world? Is this beyond His power?
8. What are the two stories of Creation in the Bible and how do they differ?
9. Are the creation stories meant to be literal? What might or might not be literal in them?
10. What would we say is "true" about the creation stories? What theological truths do they teach us?

11. Why did God create the Universe...and humanity?
12. What does it mean to be created in the Image of God? And what does being a “person” have to do with this?
13. Does your dog have an intellect and free will? Therefore, is your dog a “person?”
14. What do humans and angels hold in common and what differs between us?
15. Explain the unity of body and soul. Why do you think God made us with a body and spirit?
16. Is there a difference between a spirit and a soul?
17. What are common stereotypical differences between men and women?
18. What are some of the God-given differences between men and women, and how do these differences act in a complementary way?
19. What was the Garden of Eden like?
20. What is the difference between the fall of angels and the fall of man? Describe the fall of each.

20 minutes - Final Reflections and sharing

Go around and give each person an opportunity to share what might have stood out the most to them from the evening’s (day’s) discussion or what left them the most confused, so as to gain further clarity or insight from others.

5 minutes - Closing prayer

The leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and invites a minute of silence with all eyes closed. Each person should reflect upon what was discussed tonight, especially what stood out to him/her the most.

The leader then prays the following prayer:

God our Father, we thank You for the gift of our lives. Thank you for creating us in Your divine image. Father, when we sinned You did not abandon us. You sent Your Son Jesus to redeem us and draw us back to You in a more intimate way than ever before. May we come to know You more deeply and personally each and every day and understand more fully the great mystery of Your life and ours.

Lord, if there are questions that have been left unanswered tonight (today), please speak to us in Your own way and in Your own time. If there are answers that were given to us tonight (today) that You desire we share with others, give us the courage, wisdom, and love we need to share this faith in accord with Your will.

Jesus, we do believe in You; help us when our faith wavers and is weak. Strengthen us to know and love You in a more perfect way each and every day. Jesus, I trust in You.

Leader then invites everyone present to offer their own prayer in the following way (Note: This can be done out loud, but it might be preferable if it's done in silence at the discretion of the leader):

Let us now each bring our own personal concerns before our Lord, trusting that He hears us and knows all we need. Let us entrust these prayers to Him with full confidence that He desires to take control. (Take a minute of silence for each person to speak to God about their own personal needs for the night or day).

Leader then invites everyone to close with the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.