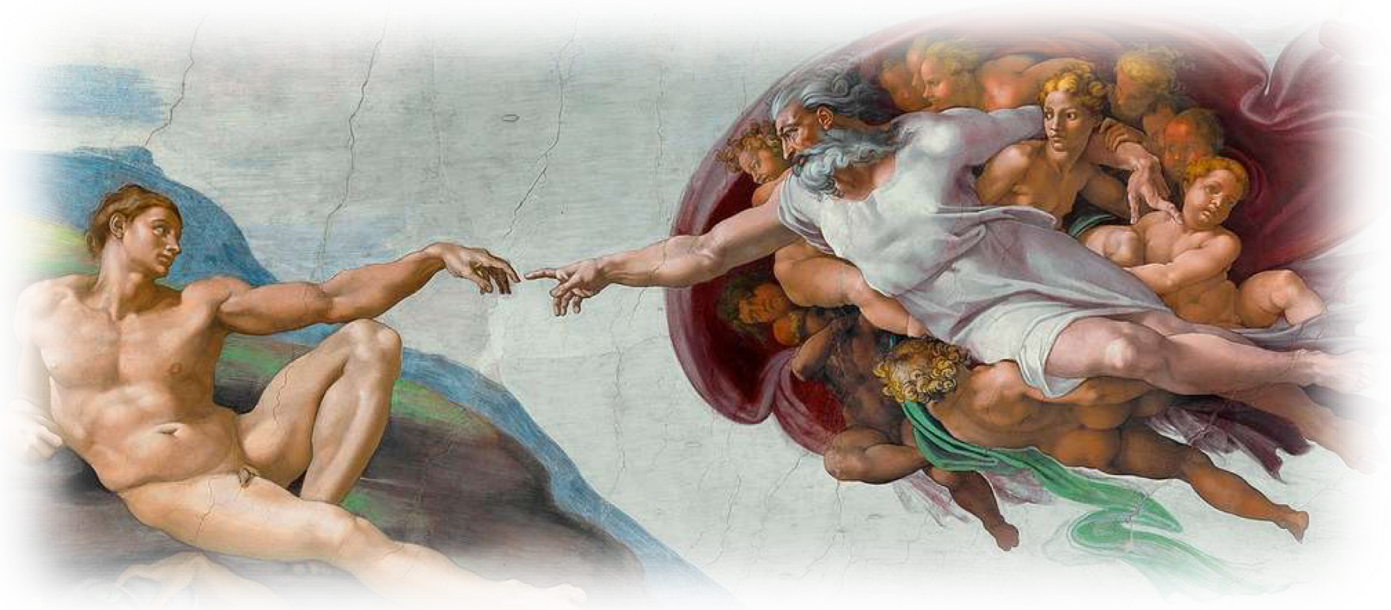


# CREATION AND THE SABBATH REST



## FROM THE PSALMS

“Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. For thou has delivered by soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; I walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”

—Psalm 116:7–9

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

—Revelation 14:13

## FROM THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

“The state of the dead Christ is the mystery of the tomb and the descent into hell. It is the mystery of Holy Saturday, when Christ, lying in the tomb, reveals God's great sabbath rest after the fulfillment of man's salvation, which brings peace to the whole universe.”

—CCC, 624

# CREATION AND THE SABBATH REST

## INTRODUCTION

Our journey to the cross begins right at the beginning of the Bible. Even before sin enters the world, there are hints about God's saving plan in the Scriptures. On the seventh day of creation, God creates the sabbath, a day of rest. How does God's rest anticipate the death of Christ?

## OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

## BACKGROUND

Our Scripture reading comes from the beginning of the Bible when God creates the world.

## SCRIPTURE

Read Genesis 2:1–3

## COMMENTARY

When we work, we often need to rest in order to recover from the strain of our labor. But why does the Bible tell us that the Lord rested? He is all-powerful! He does not become tired. What is he trying to show us by saying that he rests on the seventh day? God writes the sabbath day in the very fabric of creation to show us what he wants *us* to do. One day a week, he wants all people to set aside a day when we are not consumed with work and productivity.

Especially in cultures where daily work was necessary for daily food, it is also a sign of trust: God will provide for us each day and he will provide enough for me to rest from my labors if I obey his command to rest. The sabbath reminds us that we are made for communion with other people. When we cannot work, we spend time with one another and with God.

## FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

When Adam and Eve sin, God sets about on a new kind of work: the work of our salvation. This work begins in the Old Testament and prepares us for his ultimate work in the coming of Christ. Everything about Jesus' life—even his quiet life at Nazareth, his silences, his

prayer--was for our salvation, but the most agonizing and costly work comes at the end of his life when he suffers and dies.

Jesus dies on a Friday, the sixth day of the week. On this day our Lord breathes his last breath and completes the work of our redemption. God himself rests the ultimate rest of death in the tomb on the seventh day.

On the first day of the week, on Sunday, Christ rises from the dead. The gates of heaven, once closed by sin, are now opened. Because of his work and the sabbath rest of his death, now the sabbath takes on a new meaning. It is the true rest of heaven. This rest is the ultimate repose where we can enjoy the company of God himself as well as the angels, the saints, and all who have gone before us. Each week on the sabbath, we remember that we are made for heaven.

## IN THE LITURGY

Because the first creation was harmed by sin, Jesus brings about a new creation. Sunday is the new sabbath of the new creation. It is a day we are to keep holy. It is a day to spend time with the Lord, our families, and our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is a day for good deeds and brotherhood.

## RESOLUTION

Plan how you can make each Sunday a holy day. How can you make the day more restful for yourself and your family members? Consider how you might set aside time to pray or study scripture to draw closer to the Lord and prepare yourself for heaven.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank you for work of creation and your work of redemption. Thank you for the sabbath rest of your death. Thank you for inviting me to the great sabbath rest in heaven. Increase the gift of hope in my heart, so no matter what trials or temptations I face, I never lose sight of the joy of heaven. Amen.

# THE ORIGINAL SIN



## FROM THE PSALMS

“Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast  
love; according to your  
abundant mercy blot out my  
transgressions.”

—Psalm 51:1

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“For as by a man came death,  
by a man has come also the  
resurrection of the dead.  
For as in Adam all die, so  
also in Christ shall all be  
made alive.

—1 Corinthians 15:21–22

## FROM THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

“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.”

—CCC, 397

# THE ORIGINAL SIN

## INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to learn about Original Sin. God gave the first man and the first woman a commandment. He said they may not eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Why did they disobey the Lord and what effect does it have on us?

## OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

## BACKGROUND

The Lord allowed Adam and Eve to eat freely from the trees of the Garden, but he told them there was one tree from which they were not allowed to eat. A creature enters the Garden and tries to convince the man and the woman to disobey God.

## SCRIPTURE

Read Genesis 3:1–6

## COMMENTARY

Why would God put a tree in the garden and then tell Adam and Eve not to eat from it? God gave Adam and Eve everything they needed for natural happiness and supernatural happiness. All they had received was a gift. God made them like to be like him, but they still had to understand they were *not* God. The presence of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil served as a “limit.” Obeying the Lord was a way to show their trust, love, and respect for him. Unfortunately, they abused their freedom and gave in to the devil’s temptation. They did not trust God, and even believed the lie that God was keeping something good from them.

Their sin is called the Original Sin and it affected all of Adam and Eve’s descendants—including you and me. When they said “No” to God’s one rule, they also said “No” to his other gifts. As a result they had to leave the beauty of the Garden, and they had to live without the holiness and grace God meant for them to enjoy. From now on, Adam’s work will be difficult. Instead of a lush garden, he will farm in thorns

and thistles. Ultimately, he will turn to dust when his body and soul separates in death.

## FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

The consequences Adam and Eve receive for sin are precisely what Jesus comes to undo. Jesus’ work of salvation is to restore what was lost and heal the human race.

St. Paul tells us that Jesus is a “new Adam.” In a garden, Jesus undoes the disobedience of Adam when he says to the Father, “Not my will, but yours be done.” Adam’s disobedience brought death to all. Jesus’s obedience brings life to us all. Adam desired what was pleasurable and disobeyed the Lord in order to get it. Jesus loves his Father and endured an agonizing death because this was what his Father sent him into the world to do. Jesus takes on the effects of sin and conquers them: he wears a crown of thorns—a reminder of the thorns from Adam’s punishment. On the cross, he takes on the consequence of death. Jesus will not be conquered by death. Instead, he overcomes death in the resurrection. This shows us that he will also overcome the other consequences of sin.

## IN THE LITURGY

Many Catholic Churches have imagery that remind us of a garden. Flowers usually decorate the altar, the candles fill the Church with light, and we read about water and gold, just as is described in the Garden of Eden. Through the liturgy, the effects of sin are undone. We are brought back into communion with the Lord. At Mass, we unite ourselves to Christ and pray as Christ prays, “Thy will be done.” The Holy Mass heals the effects of sin and death.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, Adam and Eve sinned because they let their trust in you die. Grant me the grace to trust you completely. Amen.

## RESOLUTION

Practice obedience by promptly doing what your parents ask you to do, even if you do not want to do it.



# “HE SHALL CRUSH YOUR HEAD”



## FROM THE PSALMS

“Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters.

You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.”

—Psalm 74:12–14

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.”

—Revelation 12:17

## FROM THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

“After his fall, man was not abandoned by God. On the contrary, God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and his restoration from his fall. This passage in Genesis is called the Protoevangelium ("first gospel"): the first announcement of the Messiah and Redeemer, of a battle between the serpent and the Woman, and of the final victory of a descendant of hers.”

—CCC, 410

# “HE SHALL CRUSH YOUR HEAD”

## INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to learn about something the Church has traditionally called “the first Gospel.” After Adam and Eve’s sin, God immediately responds with a message of hope and a promise of redemption. How does this promise relate to Jesus’ death? We’ll find out after we pray.

## OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

## BACKGROUND

After Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord enters the Garden of Eden. God speaks to the man, the woman, and the serpent and explains the consequences of their actions. Our reading today tells us what God says to the serpent.

## SCRIPTURE

Read Genesis 3:14–15

## COMMENTARY

The serpent has long been understood as the devil, a fallen angel who disobeys God and tries to tempt humans into sin. Many bibles and art depict this serpent as a snake, but the Hebrew word describes a creature that is quite threatening. The book of Revelation, in commenting on this episode, uses the word “Dragon.”

God addresses the serpent and tells him that he will be cursed above all creatures and that God will put “enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and yours; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.” Let’s explain this part by part. What does “enmity mean”? Enmity means distance or separation. God will separate the devil from the woman. Which woman? It is not entirely clear from the passage who this woman is! But her child, her offspring, will be responsible for bruising or crushing the head of the devil. In other words, some important woman will come—a woman who has had no dealings with the devil. Her child will crush the devil.

But this passage has one other important element. The Lord says to the serpent “you will bruise his heel.” In other words, the serpent will be crushed, but not before he harms the one crushing him. He will take a bite out his heel. Snakebites are often deadly. The one crushing the serpent will have victory, but will also be harmed.

## FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

The full meaning of this passage about a woman and her offspring defeating evil makes sense in light of Christ. The woman who has total separation from the devil is the Blessed Virgin Mary. She was given God’s grace from the moment of her conception and never experienced the effects of original sin. Her son our Lord is the one who crushes the head of the devil and defeats him. The Lord takes on the deadly effects of sin when he is “bitten” by the works of the evil one. However, Jesus does not suffer death as an unwilling victim. He hands his life over and willingly takes on death so he can conquer it in the resurrection.

## IN THE LITURGY

When we celebrate the liturgy of the Immaculate Conception, the Church reads this passage as the first reading. She is the “woman” who has never had contact with evil. Our salvation is accomplished through Jesus Christ, but the beginning of her life is the beginning of God’s ultimate victory over the evil one.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, I am weak, but you have conquered the evil one. Give me the humility to turn to you when I am tempted. In my weakness, remind me to ask you for strength to defeat my tendency to sin. Amen.

## RESOLUTION

When you are tempted to sin today, think about Jesus whose life you have within you. You might struggle, but Jesus has given you his grace so through his help, you can conquer sin and temptation.