



DID GOD REALLY MAKE EVERYTHING?



ANSWERS

IN THE BEGINNING, WHEN GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH AND THE EARTH WAS WITHOUT FORM OR SHAPE, WITH DARKNESS OVER THE ABYSS AND A MIGHTY WIND SWEEPING OVER THE WATERS THEN GOD SAID: LET THERE BE LIGHT, AND THERE WAS LIGHT. GOD SAW THAT THE LIGHT WAS GOOD - GENESIS 1: 1-31

SAINTS & INSPIRATIONAL STORIES

ST LUIGI SCROSOPPI

St Luigi grew up in a difficult time where famine and poverty was present every where. He spent his life helping the poor but especially educating people to use their skills and talents to use God's creation in the best way to benefit the world. He started schools to train teachers and schools for orphans.



FR FEDEREC BARAGA

Fr Federec Baraga was gifted with a knack for languages and he dedicated his life to the service of God in the Midwest US. He especially worked with the native Americans helping them to learn about the Catholic faith and care for God's creation.



TEAM DISCUSSION

After reading over the YOUCAT numbers on the following pages, how do you think the Youth Catechism answers the question of the week? Were there any words or ideas that you did not fully understand that you would like to understand better?

ANSWER IN YOUR OWN WORDS:



YOUCAT NUMBERS FOR THIS WEEK



#40: CAN GOD DO ANYTHING? Is he almighty? "For God nothing is impossible" (see Lk 1:37). He is almighty. Anyone who calls on God in need believes that he is all-powerful. God created the world out of nothing. He is the Lord of history. He guides all things and can do everything. How he uses his omnipotence is of course a mystery. Not infrequently people ask, Where was God then? Through the prophet Isaiah he tells us, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" (Is 55:8). Often God's omnipotence is displayed in a situation where men no longer expect anything from it. The powerlessness of Good Friday was the prerequisite for the Resurrection.

#41: DOES SCIENCE MAKE THE CREATOR SUPERFLUOUS?

No. The sentence "God created the world" is not an outmoded scientific statement. We are dealing here with a theo-logical statement, therefore a statement about the divine meaning (theos = God, logos = meaning) and origin of things. The creation account is not a scientific model for explaining the beginning of the world. "God created the world" is a theological statement that is concerned with the relation of the world to God. God willed the world; he sustains it and will perfect it. Being created is a lasting quality in things and an fundamental truth about them.

EVOLUTION (LATIN EVOLUTIO = UNFOLDING, DEVELOPMENT):

the growth of the final form of organisms over millions of years. Viewed from a Christian perspective, evolution takes place as God's continuous creation in natural processes.

#42: CAN SOMEONE ACCEPT THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION AND STILL BELIEVE IN THE CREATOR?

Yes. Although it is a different kind of knowledge, faith is open to the findings and hypotheses of the sciences. Theology has no scientific competence, and natural science has no theological competence. Natural science cannot dogmatically rule out the possibility that there are purposeful processes in creation; conversely, faith cannot define specifically how these processes take place in the course of nature's development. A Christian can accept the theory of evolution as a helpful explanatory model, provided he does not fall into the heresy of evolutionism, which views man as the random product of biological processes. Evolution presupposes the existence of something that can develop. The theory says nothing about where this "something" came from. Furthermore, questions about the being, essence, dignity, mission, meaning, and wherefore of the world and man cannot be answered in biological terms. Just as "evolutionism" oversteps a boundary on the one side, so does Creationism on the other. Creationists naïvely take biblical data literally (for example, to calculate the earth's age, they cite the six days of work in Genesis 1).



CONQUEST WEEKLY ACTIVITY GUIDE

#48 WHY DID GOD CREATE THE WORLD? "The world was made for the glory of God" (First Vatican Council). There is no other reason for creation than love. In it God's glory and honor appears. To praise God, therefore, does not mean applauding the Creator. After all, man is not a spectator to the work of creation. For him, "praising" God means being grateful for his own existence together with all creation.

#43 IS THE WORLD A PRODUCT OF CHANCE? No. God, not chance, is the cause of the world. Neither in its origin nor with respect to its intrinsic order and purposefulness is it the product of factors working "aimlessly". Christians believe that they can read God's handwriting in his creation. To scientists who talk about the whole world as a random, meaningless, and aimless process, Pope John Paul II pointed out in reply in 1985, "Given a universe in which there is such a complex organization of its elements and such a wonderful purposefulness in its life, talking about chance would be equivalent to giving up the search for an explanation of the world as it appears to us. In fact it would be tantamount to accepting effects without cause. It would be an abdication of human reason, which in this way would be refusing to think and to search for a solution to problems."

#45 DO NATURAL LAWS AND NATURAL SYSTEMS COME FROM GOD ALSO?

Yes. The laws of nature and natural systems are also part of God's creation. Man is not a blank slate. He is shaped by the order and the natural laws that God has inscribed in his creation. A Christian does not simply do "whatever he wants". He knows that he harms himself and damages his environment when he denies natural laws, uses things in ways contrary to their intrinsic order, and tries to be wiser than God, who created them. It demands too much of a person when he tries to design himself from start to finish.

GENESIS (Greek = origin, beginning): the first book of the Bible, which describes, among other things, the creation of the world and of man

#44 WHO CREATED THE WORLD? God alone, who is beyond time and space, created the world out of nothing and called all things into being. Everything that exists depends on God and continues in being only because God wills it to be. The creation of the world is, so to speak, a "community project" of the Trinitarian God. The Father is the Creator, the Almighty. The Son is the meaning and heart of the world: "All things were created through him and for him" (Col 1:16). We find out what the world is good for only when we come to know Christ and understand that the world is heading for a destination: the truth, goodness, and beauty of the Lord. The Holy Spirit holds everything together; he is the one "that gives life" (Jn 6:63).

#66 WAS IT PART OF GOD'S PLAN FOR MEN TO SUFFER AND DIE?

God does not want men to suffer and die. God's original idea for man was paradise: life forever and peace between God and man and their environment, between man and woman. Often we sense how life ought to be, how we ought to be, but in fact we do not live in peace with ourselves, act out of fear and uncontrolled emotions, and have lost the original harmony that man had with the world and ultimately with God. In Sacred Scripture the experience of this alienation is expressed in the story of the Fall. Because sin crept in, Adam and Eve had to leave paradise, in which they were in harmony with each other and with God. The toil of work, suffering, mortality, and the temptation to sin are signs of this loss of paradise.



#56 DOES MAN HAVE A SPECIAL PLACE IN CREATION?

Yes. Man is the summit of creation, because God created him in his image (Gen 1:27). The creation of man is clearly distinguished from the creation of other living things. Man is a person, which means that through his understanding and will he can decide for or against love.

#57 HOW SHOULD MAN TREAT ANIMALS AND OTHER FELLOW CREATURES?

Man should honor the Creator in other creatures and treat them carefully and responsibly. Man, animals, and plants have the same Creator who called them into being out of love. Therefore a love of animals is profoundly human. Although man is allowed to use and to eat plants and animals, he is nevertheless not allowed to torture animals or to keep them in inhumane conditions. That contradicts the dignity of creation just as much as exploiting the earth thoughtlessly out of greed.

#47 WHY DID GOD REST ON THE SEVENTH DAY?

God's rest from his work points toward the completion of creation, which is beyond all human efforts. Although man in his work is the junior partner of his Creator (Gen 2:15), he can by no means redeem the world by his toil. The goal of creation is "new heavens and a new earth" (Is 65:17) through a redemption that is given to us as a gift. Thus the Sunday rest, which is a foretaste of heavenly rest, is superior to the work that prepares us for it.

#46 WHY DOES THE BOOK OF GENESIS DEPICT CREATION AS "THE WORK OF SIX DAYS"?

The symbol of the work week, which is crowned by a day of rest (Gen 1:1-2:3), is an expression of how good, beautiful, and wisely ordered creation is. From the symbolism of "the work of six days" we can derive important principles: (1) Nothing exists that was not called into being by the Creator. (2) Everything that exists is good in its own way. (3) Something that has become bad still has a good core. (4) Created beings and things are interrelated and interdependent. (5) Creation in its order and harmony reflects the surpassing goodness and beauty of God. (6) In creation there is an order of complexity: man is superior to an animal, an animal is superior to a plant, a plant is superior to inanimate matter. (7) Creation is heading for the great celebration when Christ will bring the world home and God will be everything to everyone.

#51 IF GOD IS ALL-KNOWING AND ALL-POWERFUL, WHY DOES HE NOT PREVENT EVIL?

"God allows evil only so as to make something better result from it" (St. Thomas Aquinas). Evil in the world is an obscure and painful mystery. Even the Crucified asked his Father, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). Much about it is incomprehensible. One thing, though, we know for sure: God is 100 percent good. He can never be the originator of something evil. God created the world to be good, but it is not yet complete. In violent upheavals and painful processes it is being shaped and moved toward its final perfection. That may be a better way to classify what the Church calls physical evil, for example, a birth defect, or a natural catastrophe. Moral evils, in contrast, come about through the misuse of freedom in the world. "Hell on earth"—child soldiers, suicide bombings, concentration camps—is usually man-made. The decisive question is therefore not, "How can anyone believe in a good God when there is so much evil?" but rather, "How could a person with a heart and understanding endure life in this world if God did not exist?" Christ's death and Resurrection show us that evil did not have the first word, nor does it have the last. God made absolute good result from the worst evil. We believe that in the Last Judgment God will put an end to all injustice. In the life of the world to come, evil no longer has any place and suffering ends.