

CHAPTER ONE

The Gift of Creation

“In the beginning, God created . . .” — Genesis 1:1

Objectives

- To nurture your child’s natural sense of awe and curiosity in the beauty of creation all around us.
- To reflect with your child on creation not as an event fixed in the past but as an ongoing event here and now.
- To explore with your child ways to take care of and thank God for the gift of creation.
- To help your child 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 innate to 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.

Naming the Gift

- Read to your child the creation story on pages 7-15 in the *Children’s Workbook*.
- Explain to your child that the story was written a long time ago to thank and praise God for creation. Spend some time talking about the story. Tell your child how *you* feel when you hear the creation story.
- Your child needs to know that this story comes from the Bible, so if you have a Bible at home, show your child the story. (The Bible begins with the creation story — *Genesis 1:1*.)

Experiencing the Gift

- Have your child color or add original touches to the pages of the creation story in the workbook and complete pages 18-21. This could be done over several days. Invite other members of the family to help.
- Any time you are with your child (while riding in the car or taking a walk), reflect with your child on creation. Often our children do this without prompting; watch for such clues. Also, children often ask questions to which we do not have the answer. We don’t need to

have all of the answers. Take these occasions to do some research with your child in books or on the internet. Or, prompt reflection by playing games: when you’re outside, stand still for a moment and ask your child to look up at the sky. How would you describe the clouds? What shapes can you see in them? Imagine what it would be like to ride on a cloud.

- When out for a walk, ask your child to think of a color. Then help your child to notice — perhaps to count — the number of times that color appears.
- Observe different plants and trees that you pass when you are out walking. Examine them carefully — the textures of a leaf, the structure of a flower, the movement of an insect.
- When shopping for groceries, reflect on the abundance of food from around the world. Where did the different canned foods come from? What sort of plants or trees did they grow on?
- You may live where there are many restaurants of different nationalities. Talk about the variety of peoples, ideas, traditions in the world. Living in a city or large town can provide many opportunities to see first hand the incredible diversity in humanity.
- Go on a scavenger hunt, gathering things of different textures: 5 hard things (rocks, nuts); 5 smooth things (flower petals, silk cloth); 5 rough things (tree bark, cement) and so forth. Trips to the seaside, the country, parks provide many chances to enjoy nature.

• When talking to your child about creation, avoid preaching or constant explanations. Invite your child’s thoughts with open-ended or “wonder” questions. For example: “I wonder what it’s like to be a bird.” “I wonder how many blades of grass there are in our lawn.” “What’s it like for you to stand under a large tree?” “What’s it like for you to hear the thunder?” While engaging your child in such reflections, share your own feelings as you experience creation:

- a warm, sunny day; a storm; a windy day; thunder and lightning
- a deserted beach; a riverside; mountains; fields
- a rough sea; a calm sea
- a blue, cloudless sky; a cloudy sky; rain clouds; the sky at night

Thanking God for the Gift

- Invite your child to thank God for creation. Ask your child how the catechist gave thanks to God in the children’s session. What did they talk about?
- Basically, we can thank God a) in our *action*, and b) in our *prayer*.

Thanking God in Action

- A simple way to take care of our world is not to waste its resources. In your family you are probably very concerned not to waste things.
- Consider reusing paper or plastic bags, making use of recycling centers, and so on.
- Ask your child to think of different ways your family can get involved in conserving resources.
- Remember, it is from *your* example that your child will learn best how to take care of the gift of creation.

Thanking God in Prayer

- When you and your child are exploring the gift of creation, find a place in your home where you can display your Bible with a few items to help your family keep “creation” in mind. Ask your child to collect things to display there — leaves, pebbles, shells, twigs, a bowl of water, a potted plant, some fruit, photographs, postcards of places someone has visited, and so forth. Use this display as a focal point for prayer. Choose a moment when you can come together as a family to thank God for creation.
- Create as relaxed an atmosphere as possible. You could start by lighting a candle and reading the creation story from the Bible or your child’s workbook. You might then say this or a similar prayer:

**God, our Creator,
we thank you for the world.
We thank you for all the wonderful
plants, animals and people
that make our world so full of life.**

Each family member could then say:

God, thank you for the gift of ____.
(Each name one thing to thank God for. Then pray:)

**God, our Creator, as we prepare for
(child’s name)’s first communion, help us always
to take care of your creation. Amen.**

- Complete page 20 in the *Children’s Workbook*.

Sharing the Gift with Others

- Is your child aware of any people who are not getting their fair share of the gifts of creation? Where are people without enough food? How might you help homeless people? Have there recently been any natural disasters, floods or earthquakes, in which people need help? Invite your child to share her or his feelings about such events. And share your feelings with your child.
- Together, look at page 19 in your child’s workbook and fill it in.
- Ask your child to think of ways you might help those who have no food. How might your child share part of an allowance to help someone in need? Discuss this with your child (but please don’t insist on it).
- Consider contributing to or volunteering for service organizations: Food Banks; Catholic Charities; local shelters; food services.

• If your local church organizes a soup kitchen or service for shut-ins, you could work with your child in such projects.

• Harvest festivals, such as Thanksgiving Day, are celebrations of the gifts of creation. If your own church doesn’t have one, consider getting together with a few other families in the first communion program to start one. The children could help in this by decorating the church and helping distribute the gifts.

Celebrating the Gift

- Tell your child that another name for the Mass is “Eucharist.” It comes from a Greek word meaning “thanksgiving.”
- Explain to your child that during our Eucharist our parish family gathers to listen to God’s Word in the Bible where we find the story of creation; we respond by giving thanks to God for the wonders of creation. We thank God for the beauty of the world, the people in it, and the lives we share. In the Eucharistic Prayer we thank God for Jesus — the gift of God’s own Son.
- Remind your child that at the Last Supper, before Jesus shared bread with his friends, he *gave thanks to God*, Creator of the universe. He did the same with the cup after supper. He *gave thanks to God* before sharing the cup. We do the same thing at our Eucharist.

