

We Are God's Apprentice Artists

PRO TIP
Download other
grades for alternate
activities!

**CONNECTIONS TO THE
CATECHISM OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

MATERIALS

- ▶ [In the Beginning....](#)
- ▶ [The Church of the Annunciation](#)

SUGGESTED TIME

45 minutes

Teacher Background

God is the Creator, and all of God's creation is good. After the Fall, human nature was damaged, but the Incarnation is the renewal of creation and affirms the goodness of human activity and the human body. And while only God can create something out of nothing, humanity has a special role to play in stewarding God's creation, and even co-creating in collaboration with Him as apprentice artists.



HOW DOES THIS LESSON HELP INOCULATE STUDENTS AGAINST GENDER IDEOLOGY?

Gender ideology holds that we self-create our identity. Our bodies are amazing machines that are ours to manipulate as we wish. But in truth, we are each made in God's image, a unity of body and soul. Our bodies are God-given temples of the Holy Spirit that are an essential part of our human nature. Because of this truth, in addition to the science of biology, it is impossible to redefine sexual identity as we see fit.

Activity

- A. Begin by asking if anyone knows the first words of the Bible. *"In the beginning."*
- B. Note that these words open the story of creation of the world in the Book of Genesis, and we also read them somewhere else in the Bible. Then ask if anyone knows what other book of the Bible begins with those same words. *The Gospel of John*.
- C. Explain in a mini-lecture that rather than being a completely new story, the account of creation continues in the New Testament. Remember, the opening words of the Gospel of John echo the first lines of Genesis: "In the beginning," **(John 1:1)**. The sacred author continues to echo Genesis: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" **(John 1:1-5)**. In the beginning, God said "Let there be light," **(Genesis 1:3)**. St. John tells us that Jesus "was the light of the human race." **(John 1:4)**. The Incarnation is a new beginning for all creation! The second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ, is God the Son. He Himself is not a new creation. He has existed for all time with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But His coming — His taking on the flesh of humanity and sharing fully in our experience except for sin — is a renewal of creation. For, by Christ sharing in our humanity, the actions of human life are sanctified.

D. Distribute [In the Beginning....](#) and read the information aloud while students follow along.

E. Then put students into small groups to discuss the questions that follow. After a few moments, ask groups to report on their answers, and use the answer key to guide the discussion. Encourage students to think of all the ways they are apprentices to God as artists. Think beyond typical work they might do in art class to how they might create music, make photo collages, write stories or poetry, design things for their homes, plant gardens, and so forth.

F. Explain that the place where the Angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary is marked by a church now: the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth in Northern Israel. Inside are gifts of beautiful icons, mosaics, and portraits of Mary from countries around the world.

G. Distribute [The Church of the Annunciation](#). With students still in their small groups, have them examine the photograph and discuss the questions that follow.

H. After a few moments, ask groups to report on their answers, and use the answer key to guide the discussion.

I. Finally, share with the class that our body is part of God's creation, and a gift from God. God, who took on human flesh in Mary's womb, knew each of us before He formed us in our mother's womb! When we reject the wonderful gift of our bodies, we are (even if unintentionally) rejecting the Giver. We are each made in God's image, a unity of body and soul. Our bodies are God-given temples of the Holy Spirit that are an essential part of our human nature. Because of this truth, in addition to the science of biology, it is impossible to redefine sexual identity as we see fit.

J. Continue to explain that Pope Francis said in his encyclical *Laudato Si: The acceptance of our bodies as God's gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home. The Pope says that when we believe we have absolute power over our own bodies, it makes us think we have absolute power over creation. Pope Francis also explains that valuing your body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if you are to accept the specific gifts of another man or woman and the work of God. The Church also emphasizes that those who experience confusion and distress about their body and identity are made in God's image, of infinite dignity. As Christians, we must pray for peace in their unique struggles and support them with Christian charity so that they may come to accept their sexual identity, all the while upholding the truth of God's plan for life and love.*

In the Beginning....

Have you ever noticed that the very first words of the Book of Genesis, "In the beginning" (Genesis 1), appear in another place in the Bible—in the New Testament, the Gospel of John begins with those same exact words: "In the beginning" (John 1). Why do you think that might be important?

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

To begin to think about this question, you might recall the story of how God created the Earth in seven days. God created light and separated it from the darkness. He fashioned the sky. He separated the sea from land and populated the earth with grasses and trees. He modeled the sun and moon and positioned the stars and planets in their heavenly orbits. God is the Great Artist. With the sky as His

canvas, He paints with the fiery pink of the sunrise and the dramatic orange hues of the sunset. Like a sculptor, He chisels the continents and cliffs. He brings forth to great multitude of living creatures. The depths of the ocean are filled with fish, while flocks of birds feathered in dazzling colors fill the sky. Animals of every kind come forth to graze the plains, burrow in the deserts, roam in the forests and jungles, and stalk across the tundra throughout this part of the creation story. We have many different terms: "God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25).

THE CREATION OF HUMAN BEINGS

At this point, we come to a creation where God reveals Himself even more intimately for He makes a being "in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). God creates us human beings. God provides His creation with food and a home. He commands this creation to be a steward — a caretaker — of the world. He tells mankind to multiply — to participate in the wonder of creation by bringing forth life. At the end of this sixth day of creation, God is overjoyed with His masterpiece: "God looked at everything He had made, and found it very good" (Genesis 1:31, emphasis added).

Of course, you probably know the continuation of this story, and how Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent and, in their pride, rejected God's love. Their original sin broke the communion that had existed between heaven and earth, and damaged human nature. Humanity would



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The Church of the Annunciation

Directions: Observe the photograph and then answer the questions that follow.



1. The Church of the Annunciation is built on the spot in Nazareth where the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of God. What figures do you see carved into the facade (the face of the building) that depict this moment in Salvation History?

2. People from all over the world visit the Holy Land. Because the Catholic faith is universal, we use Latin as a common language. Across the facade of this church is written, "Natum enim locum est et habitum in nobis" which means "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). How would you connect this verse to the Annunciation?

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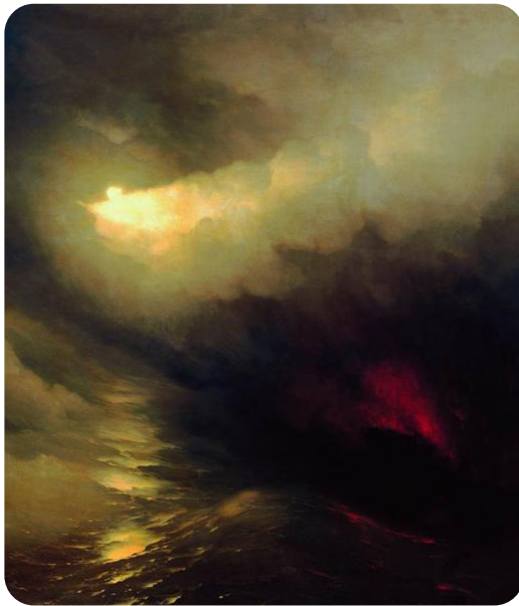
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Of course, you probably know the continuation of this story, and how Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent and, in their pride, rejected God’s love. Their Original Sin broke the communion that had existed between Heaven and earth, and damaged human nature. Humanity would

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STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

need a redeemer to restore us to God's friendship. Our nature would need to be made new.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

And so the account of creation continues in the New Testament. The opening words of the Gospel of John echo the first lines of Genesis: "In the beginning," (John 1:1). The sacred author continues to echo Genesis: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:1-5). In the beginning, God said "Let there

be light," (Genesis 1:3). St. John tells us that Jesus "was the light of the human race." (John 1:4). The Incarnation is a new beginning for all creation. The second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ, is God the Son. Jesus is not a new creation. He has existed for all time with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But His coming — His taking on the flesh of humanity and sharing fully in our experience except for sin — is a renewal of creation. For, by Christ sharing in our humanity, the actions of human life are sanctified.

A NEW BEGINNING: THE INCARNATION

The Son of God entered time and assumed a human nature. You may know the account of the Angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would conceive a child: the moment when, by the



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power of the Holy Spirit, God the Son, the Word of God, became flesh in her womb. This moment is called the Annunciation.

Jesus took on a human nature without losing His divine nature. Because of Christ's humanity, we are all invited to share in His divinity. St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians reminds us of this calling: "For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them" (2:10).

Jesus opened Heaven to us through His death and Resurrection, but the effects of sin still remain. Our pathway is not easy, but we have models, the saints, to help guide us on this path towards sanctification. The saints teach us that our work — our stewardship of creation and contribution to it — matters. Each and every action that we take matters and is an opportunity to participate in the building of the Kingdom of God: serving others, playing with others, utilizing our talents for good.

Discussion Questions

- 1 Why are the repeated words "in the Beginning" at the opening of the Old and New Testaments important to our faith?
- 2 What happened at the Annunciation?
- 3 God is pure spirit. Yet at the Annunciation, God Himself took on a human body. Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father, will always have a human body. What does that tell us about our bodies?
- 4 Like our Creator Father, each of us is a creative being. Only God can create something out of nothing, of course, but we can use the goods of creation to make things that are useful, beautiful, and improve the lives of others. In what way(s) are you an apprentice artist of God's? Make a list.

1. **Both verses are talking about the creation of the world. In the beginning, God made everything. God is the Blessed Trinity; God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. At the Incarnation, creation is made new. The Gospel of John teaches us that everything that was made, was made through God the Son: Jesus. These lines reveal the glory of creation and point us toward the mystery of the renewal of creation: the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.**
2. **Jesus became man.**
3. **Our bodies are good! Jesus has redeemed our flesh.**
4. **Accept reasoned answers.**

The Church of the Annunciation

Directions: Observe the photograph and then answer the questions that follow.



- 1 The Church of the Annunciation is built on the spot in Nazareth where the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of God. What figures do you see carved into the façade (the face of the building) that depict this moment in Salvation History?

Easily visible are Mary and the Angel Gabriel.

- 2 People from all over the world visit the Holy Land. Because the Catholic faith is universal, we use Latin as a common language. Across the façade of this church is written, "*Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis*" which means "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). How would you connect this verse to the Annunciation?

The Annunciation was the moment the Word became flesh in Mary's womb.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 3 The Father's love for us is fully revealed in Jesus Christ. What do you think God, in His wisdom, understood about love when He decided to take on human flesh? Why does it take a person to fully reveal God's love for *all people*?
You may allow students to wonder about this question. A truly visible, human, personal connection is needed to reveal yourself or your love for another person. You could share the quote from Pope St. John Paul II, that love desires to be made incarnate.
- 4 Many people with different artistic talents built this church in Nazareth. Imagine you had a young niece or nephew who was an artist of some kind, e.g. an architect, sculptor, gardener, painter, or musician. Imagine you gave them a gift so they could develop their talent. What would you hope they would do with your gift? Why?
We would hope they would use the gift to create something beautiful, great, etc., because the gift was intended to be used that way, out of love for the recipient.
- 5 Sometimes we receive a gift that we don't like. Why do you think most of us would not want the giver of a gift to find out that we didn't like it, or even that we gave it away or returned it for a refund?
Because it is a rejection of the giver, especially if they put thought into picking it out for you. You may ask the class if they have ever given someone a present, and learned later that they "re-gifted" it? How does it feel when you can tell someone doesn't like a gift you gave them?
- 6 God has given you a body, with which you can do many, many good things. Do you use your legs to run, your hands to write beautiful poetry, your lungs to play the flute or saxophone? How do you think it makes God feel when you use His gift to you in ways that develop your unique talents? Why?
It surely pleases God. Even as much as we may know someone well enough to pick out the perfect gift for them, God knows us even more intimately — He knows us better than we know ourselves.

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