

Laudato Si and Acceptance of Our Bodies

PRO TIP
Download other grades for alternate activities!

CONNECTIONS TO THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CCC 358, 373

MATERIALS

- ▶ Holy Bibles (or [Genesis Verses](#))
- ▶ Short video of Olympic ice dancing available at SophiaOnline.org/IceDancing
- ▶ [The Power and Gift of the Human Body](#)

CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY STANDARDS

7.8.1 TOB Describe how the body, by its mere existence, communicates that the human person is a gift just by the fact that it exists. (TOB 14:4; CCC 357, 364)

8.1.1 TOB Propose that creation should be received as a gift and not manipulated, dominated and controlled. (cf. TOB 13:3-4, 59:3; CCC 358, 373)

Teacher Background

In his encyclical, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis writes, “Acceptance of our bodies . . . is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift. . . , whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology.” The Pope’s words speak to one of the key ways the human person can live out the universal call to Holiness and discover how to be good stewards.



HOW DOES THIS LESSON HELP INOCULATE STUDENTS AGAINST GENDER IDEOLOGY?

Gender ideology asserts that we own our bodies, and that they are ours to do with as we wish. But the truth is that being good stewards of creation begins with accepting the gift of our own bodies and taking care of them. Our bodies, like all of creation, should be received as a gift and not manipulated, dominated and controlled.

Activity

- A. Begin by calling on/asking different volunteers to read the following passages from the book of Genesis. Whenever possible, have students look these up and read them from their own Bibles. If Bibles are not available, the verses are printed on the [Genesis Verses](#) **handout**.

■ Genesis 1: 26-30

Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth. God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.* Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth. God also said: See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food. And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.

Genesis Verses

Directions: If you don't have your Bible with you, you may read the assigned verses below.

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Genesis 2:4-7

This is the story of the heavens and the earth at their creation when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—there was no field or shrub on earth and no grass of the field had sprouted, for the LORD God had sent no rain upon the earth and there was no man on the ground. But a stream was flowing out of the ground—then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Genesis 2:15-20

Then the LORD God took the man and set him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it. The LORD God gave the man the order: You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. From that tree you shall not eat, when you eat from it you shall die. The LORD God said: It is not good for the man to be alone, I will make a helper suited to him. So the LORD God formed out of the ground of the wild animals and the birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each living creature was that to name. The man gave names to all the tame animals, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals, but none proved to be a helper suited to the man.

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■ **Genesis 2: 15–20**

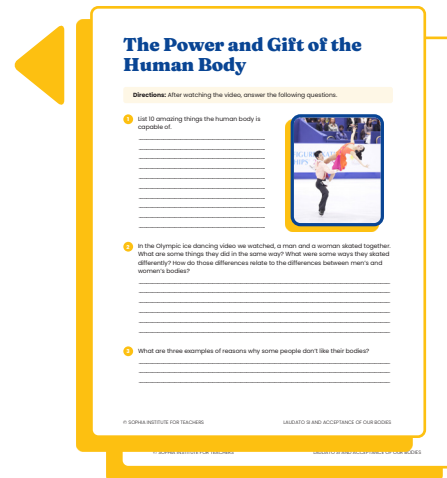
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■ **Genesis 2: 21–25**

The LORD God then built the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman. When he brought her to the man, the man said: “This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called ‘woman,’ for out of man this one has been taken.” That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.

- B.** Have the students raise their hands and share what truths these passages tell us about human beings. *Accept reasoned answers. If needed, prompt them with ideas such as: human beings need companionship; we are made in the image and likeness of God; God gives human beings dominion over creation; He tells us to be fruitful and multiply; God settled man in a Garden; human beings are created with a body; there is a difference between men’s and women’s bodies.*
- C.** Explain that after reading Genesis, we can conclude that men and women have bodies, which are part of God’s design for each of us and are a gift we are to take care of.
- D.** Show a video of Olympic couples’ ice dancing such as the one available at **SophiaOnline.org/IceDancing** and watch the video together. While or after you watch, discuss how many of the movements the pair did seemed designed to highlight the strength and stability of the man, alongside the grace and beauty of the woman. Of course, they are both strong and graceful to be able to skate in the Olympics. But their bodies complement each other in this ice dancing routine.

- E. Distribute the handout [The Power and Gift of the Human Body](#). Have students complete this handout with a partner.
- F. Go over the answers to the handout as a large group.
- G. After going over the answers to the handout refer back to the video and point out that what we saw in the video reveals the results of years of discipline, dedication, and hard work. It shows the awesomeness of how God has designed us. While many of us can't do those specific things, we have all been uniquely designed by God and have been given our bodies as an incredible gift.



- H. Conclude by emphasizing that we can know our bodies are a good gift simply because they exist. God gave us our bodies as a gift and so they are good in and of themselves. We should recognize our bodies, like all of creation, are a precious gift to care for lovingly.

Genesis Verses

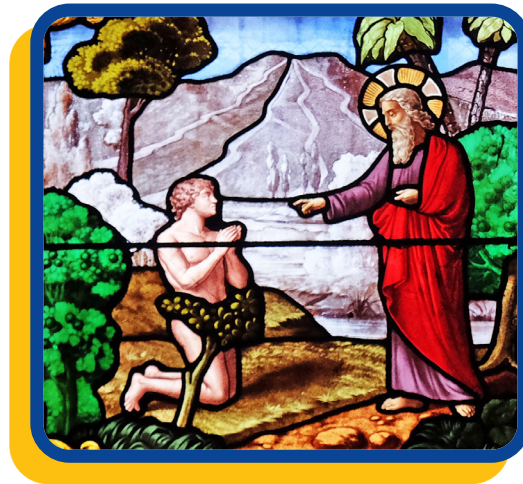
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STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

Genesis 2: 21-25

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The Power and Gift of the Human Body

Directions: After watching the video, answer the following questions.

- 1 List 10 amazing things the human body is capable of.

Accept reasoned answers.



- 2 In the Olympic ice dancing video we watched, a man and a woman skated together. What are some things they did in the same way? What were some ways they skated differently? How do those differences relate to the differences between men's and women's bodies?

Many of the movements they made were the same, such as when they would skate in a particular direction or spin; other times, the man would lift the woman, providing a stable base and showing men's greater strength. Many of the movements highlight the strength and stability of the man, alongside the grace and beauty of the woman. None of this is to say that women cannot be strong and men cannot be graceful. Of course, men and women can both be strong and graceful. But their bodies are designed to complement each other, as shown in couples ice dancing.

- 3 What are three examples of reasons why some people don't like their bodies?

They may dislike their facial features, or hair, they may think they are too skinny, too fat, not coordinated or athletic enough; accept additional reasoned answers.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 4 What are the culture's standards for determining what makes a body "good"?
- Allow discussion. Some may say a body is thought of as good if it is attractive to others; Others may say each individual decides for themselves if it is good.**
- 5 What does God tell us makes our bodies good?
- Simply that it exists. God gave us our bodies as a gift and so they are good in and of themselves.**
- 6 What are some examples of things that are good for us to do that can keep our bodies healthy?
- Exercise, a healthy diet, adequate sleep, drinking plenty of fluids, brushing our teeth, practicing good hygiene, getting fresh air and sunshine, getting glasses if we need help seeing; accept additional reasoned answers.**
- 7 What are some examples of things that our culture tells us is good to do to our bodies, but which are actually harmful?
- Allow discussion depending on student maturity. Possible answers include drug use, excessive alcohol intake, excessive plastic surgeries, puberty blockers or high-dose, cross-sex hormones, "gender-affirming care" surgeries; accept additional reasoned answers.**
- 8 In his encyclical, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis writes, "Acceptance of our bodies...is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift..., whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology."
- a. What does the pope say is the result of thinking you have absolute power over your body?
- That we have absolute power over all of creation.**
- b. What is the proper attitude we should have towards all of creation, including our bodies?
- Viewing it as a precious gift to care for lovingly.**

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Genesis Verses

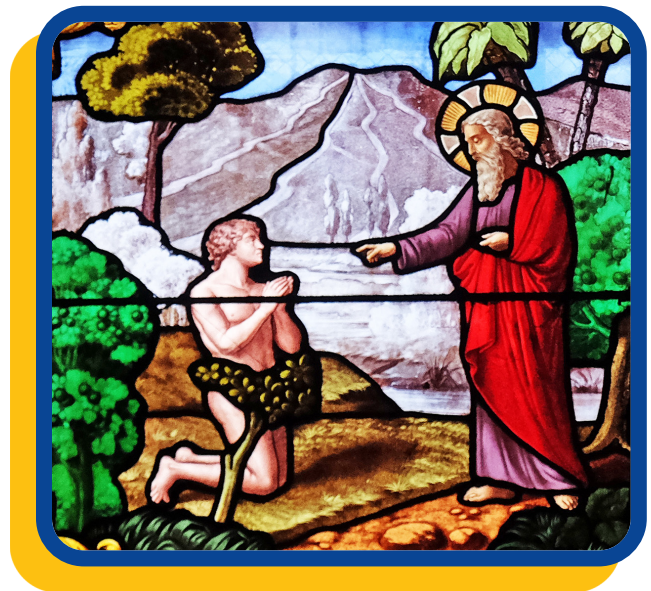
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