

# Revision Booklet



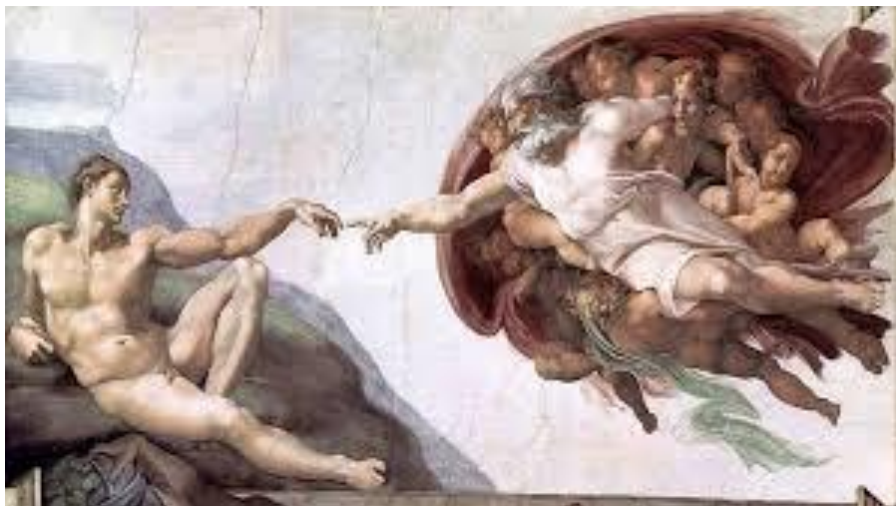
**GCSE Religious Studies**

**Foundational Catholic Theology**

## **Component 1**

**Theme 1:**

**Origins and Meaning**



# Theme 1: Origins and Meaning

Key Concepts	
<b>Creation ex nihilo</b>	<i>creation out of nothing. Before God created the universe, nothing existed. Only God can create out of nothing.</i>
<b>Evolution</b>	<i>the process of mutation and natural selection which leads to changes in species over time to suit particular environments..</i>
<b>Imago Dei</b>	<i>in the image of God. The belief that human beings are uniquely a reflection of God's personhood. Unlike the other animals, human beings are rational, free and moral.</i>
<b>Inspiration</b>	<i>"God breathed" The belief that the Spirit of God guides an individual to act or write what is good and true.</i>
<b>Omnipotence</b>	<i>the belief that God is all powerful.</i>
<b>Revelation</b>	<i>the word used to describe all of the ways in which God makes himself known to human beings. Christians believe that God does this finally and fully in the person of Jesus Christ.</i>
<b>Stewardship</b>	<i>the duty to care for creation responsibly, as stewards rather than consumers, and to protect it for future generations.</i>
<b>Transcendence</b>	<i>existing outside of space and time; God exists in a way that makes him nothing like anything else that exists, above and beyond creation.</i>

## Creation out of nothing - 'ex nihilo'.

Catholics believe that God created the Universe out of nothing (ex nihilo) - there were no 'ingredients' already in existence for him to use, as He created everything. Not only was there no water, air, land, light or dark, there wasn't even any time or space.

Only God can create out of nothing because he is omnipotent (all powerful).

**St Augustine of Hippo**, an early Christian thinker, explored this idea in his writings *Confessions XII,7*.

*"...you, O Lord ... made something in the Beginning which is of yourself, in your Wisdom, which is born of your own substance, and you created this thing out of nothing... From nothing, then, you created heaven and earth".*

So, God created the universe just as it says in Genesis 1 and 2????

The Bible is a written text like other fiction and non-fiction books.

To properly understand a Shakespeare play, we need to know when it was written, what life was like at that time, how language differed then, why he wrote it, what messages he wanted to convey and who he wrote it for.



**For Catholics, the same is true of the Bible.**

Not all Christians interpret the Bible in the same way and so they understand the Creation accounts differently.

However, **all Christians do believe;**

- in God
- that the people who wrote the biblical accounts were inspired by God
- that God makes himself known to human beings through the Bible
- the Bible is the Word of God and helps us to live our lives today.

## How Catholics view the Genesis accounts

When you read the accounts of creation in Genesis you realise that they are two different stories. Genesis 1 was written down about 450 BCE as a poem and it tells of the six days of creation, with God resting on the seventh, making the day holy. Genesis 2 was written earlier in about 950 BCE and focuses on the story of the creation of Adam and Eve in some detail.

**Catholics today accept that the two creation stories were written as myths.**

A myth is a symbolic story that conveys a hidden truth and shouldn't be taken as literally true.

The messages that the stories give is what is important. Although the two accounts of creation in Genesis have different details, they share the same truths:

### 1. God made everything that exists -

"Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Gen 1:1-2

"This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground." Gen 2:4-5

2. **Everything that God made was good** -

"God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was Good." Gen 1:10 and "The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him". Gen 2:18

3. **Humans were the final act of God's creation, but the most important** -

"Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Gen 1:26. In the second account it says "Then the LORD God formed a man from dust of the ground and breathed into the nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Gen 2:7



The big idea underpinning the creation accounts is that God created everything *ex nihilo*, out of love and that humans were created to experience the love of God, creation and other humans.

Catholics believe that the creation accounts should not be interpreted literally as they come from different times and reflect the thoughts and attitudes of the societies in which they originated. However, they do tell us undeniable truths about God.

## What do other Christians believe about the Creation accounts?

- 'Fundamentalist' or 'literalist' Christians believe that the Bible is a factual record that describes events exactly as they happened.
- They believe the Genesis accounts are historical accounts of what actually happened at the beginning of everything.
- So, a fundamentalist reading of the Bible leads to the belief that the Universe was created in six days;  
**Christians who believe this are called Creationists.**
- So Eve was created from Adam's rib exactly as it says in the Bible.





## Jewish views

In Jewish belief, God is the source of all life and referred to throughout the Torah as the sole creator. Prayers are said in Orthodox synagogues expressing this belief 'Blessed be He who spoke and the world existed.' The **modeh ani** prayer said by many Jews each morning and thanks God for allowing life for another day.

Genesis (the first book of the Torah) tells two creation stories:

Heaven and earth, animals and humans are created in six days with the seventh day being a day of rest. Each week observant Jews celebrate Shabbat and keep it as a day of rest.

The second creation story in Genesis describes how Adam and Eve were created and placed in the Garden of Eden. In both, humans are created on the sixth day. Adam, the first human being, was made in the image of God, from dust from the earth. Adam and Eve had power over all things.

Traditionally Rosh Hashanah is the celebration of the day when God created the world and marks the beginning of the New Year.

Some Orthodox Jews believe these stories are true accounts. Other, perhaps more Reform Jews, believe that the creation accounts are stories which shouldn't be considered as historical facts. Some may believe that God started the universe through the Big Bang and has guided the creation of life through evolution.

## Non-religious views about the origins of the universe:

### The Big Bang and Evolution

#### The Big Bang Theory

This theory was first put forward by a Catholic priest, Fr Georges Lemaitre and then much later by Professor Stephen Hawking.

The theory is a result of observations about the universe:

- galaxies far away from our galaxy (which is called the Milky Way) are getting further away and as they do that the whole universe is cooling down
- as you observe these galaxies and their stage of development, it seems to suggest that the universe is about 15 billion years old, which has led scientists to believe that there was a one-off moment when it all began, before this nothing existed. Hawking calls this a 'moment of singularity'.



The matter that makes up the universe was once compacted together, but because it was so dense and hot it could no longer keep itself together. The matter exploded in the moment we call the 'Big Bang'. At this point space and time were created and the temperature gradually decreased until it was what it is today. During this time elements such as helium and

hydrogen were formed, islands of more solid matter took shape and these gradually combined to form billions of galaxies, containing billions of stars. These form the universe we know today.

The Big Bang theory has led Hawking and some other scientists, to conclude that there is no evidence to suggest that there is a Creator responsible for the origin of the Universe, They believe things may just have happened by themselves.

## The Catholic view of Big Bang Theory

The Catholic Church has no reason to question the evidence that scientists present about the origins of the universe.

There is a long history of the Catholic Church being interested in and leading on areas of scientific discovery. In fact, it doesn't have to be a choice between religion and science because both are perfectly possible.

The theory raises almost as many questions as answers. eg where did the matter come from that caused the Big Bang? Hawking suggests that since gravity exists, the universe can and will create itself from nothing, but the question is, where did the law of gravity come from? Neither gravity nor matter are 'nothing', so if either of these existed before the Universe then the Universe has not come from nothing.

Science and religion are answering different questions. The author of *Genesis* is expressing meaning rather than presenting a factual account of historical events. Scientists are answering the question of how the Universe was created.

Catholics believe that if the Big Bang theory is correct then perhaps this is the way that God chose to create the world.



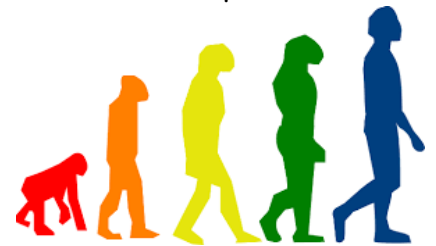
## Scientific theories of evolution



**Charles Darwin** published his book 'On the Origin of the Species' in 1859. Having studied in the Gallapagos Islands and observing differences between species, Darwin concluded that species with particularly strong variations assisted the survival of that species. This process is referred to as '**survival of the fittest**' or **natural selection**.

According to this theory of Evolution, one species is descended from another species from which it is different.

Eg human beings have descended from an ape like species who themselves came from a species of mammal, these mammals descended from a reptile who had come from a fish until eventually all life can be traced back to a simple bacterium.



The theory of evolution is supported by:

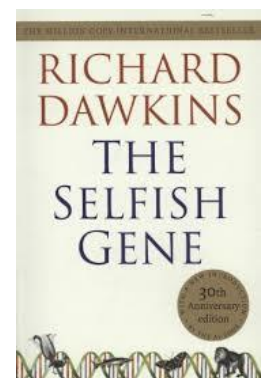
- fossil records which reveal that a large number of species have not survived and
- that earlier forms of animals have survived but in a mutated form (for example elephants are closely related to the extinct woolly mammoth).
- DNA research also seems to suggest that there are very close similarities between many species, which further reinforces evolutionary theory.

### Richard Dawkins

Professor Dawkins believes that the theory of evolution and natural selection explain the origins of the universe much better than the idea of a creator God.

Dawkins has built on Darwin's theory of natural selection.

In his book, *The Selfish Gene* (1976), Dawkins argues that each living organism's body is just a **survival machine** for its genes and does not serve any other purpose. He described life as just "**bytes and bytes and bytes of digital information**", therefore humans are no more than carriers of DNA whereby over time, good genes survive, and bad genes die out.



Dawkins rejects:

- any notion of a creator God who has a plan for the universe
- the concept of an immortal soul given by God.

## Is evolution compatible with Catholic beliefs?

For many, Darwin's and Dawkins' views are challenging because they appear to present a negative view of humanity:

- the creation of humans was just a lucky genetic mutation
- humans are merely another slightly more advanced form of animals
- humans have no greater importance on this earth than other animals

However this view is seen as overly negative by the Catholic Church which has **embraced the theory of evolution**.

**Saint John Paul II restated the view of Pope Pius XII, that the Church sees no conflict between evolution and the teachings of the Christian faith.**

He went on to encourage theologians and scholars of Scripture to be informed by scientific research in their ongoing work.

Pope John Paul II in his Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences: On Evolution (22 October 1996)

"... In his encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950), my predecessor Pius XII has already affirmed that **there is no conflict between evolution and the doctrine of the faith** regarding man and his vocation."

What is important to the Catholic Church is not whether God chose to create through a Big Bang and a process of evolution over many millions of years but that in *Genesis*, God created with purpose and so everything that exists is part of His loving plan.

**This is what is important for Christians to understand: not how it happened but why it happened.**

"If methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it **never truly conflicts with faith**, for earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God."

Gaudium et Spes 36



## Origin and sanctity of human life

For those with no religious faith, life is special because it is the only life we have.

For Christians, human life has special value because they believe that each person is unique because God made them and there is no-one else quite like them.



All Christian denominations believe that human life is special and a gift from God.

The Catholic Church teaches that all human life is sacred (holy) and that everyone has a right to life which should be protected and valued at every stage.

## Imago Dei - the Image of God

Both of the accounts in *Genesis* 1 and 2 describe how God planned and made the world. Everything that exists does so because God created it, including plants and animals and his final creation, humans, who were his most important.

'Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end...'

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2258

Both *Genesis* accounts tell us that human beings are created for three main reasons:

### 1. Humans are special.

In *Genesis* 1 it states that humans were not just created by God but created in His image.

"Then God said, Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; Male and female he created them." *Gen* 1. 26-27

In *Genesis* 2 God creates Adam from the earth and breathed life into him so that he could live.

Humans are unlike the rest of creation because they were made in a unique way and most importantly in the Image of God - Imago Dei.

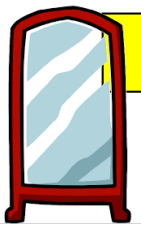
Catholics believe that because humans have been made in God's image, they have a special dignity which should be recognised in everyone that they meet whatever their gender, colour, status or belief.



2. **Humans have an immortal soul** which has come from God and will go back to God, so their destiny is to share eternal joy with God in heaven.

3. **Humans have freedom to make moral choices.**

In Genesis 2 it says "And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. For when you eat from it you will certainly die." Gen 2:16-17



## Saint Catherine of Siena on the Image of God

St Catherine (1347-80) spent most of her time with sinners and outcasts because she knew that God loved them all as they were all created in His image.

There are three important messages that come from St Catherine's writing:

**1 Humans come from God** - in the same way that children originate from their parents or your reflection in the mirror originates from you, "Her dignity is that of her creation, seeing that she is in the image of God."

**2 Conscience** - when we look in a mirror we see our face, the good and bad; freckles, spots, wrinkles! Since humans have God's truth in their lives, they have an inner conscience that tells them when their actions are right or wrong, just like looking in a mirror, 'In that same mirror of the goodness of God the soul knows her own indignity, which is the consequence of her own fault'.

**3 Love** - St Catherine reflects that the reason that humans have been made with such dignity in the image of God is because He loves them immeasurably. He created out of love. "You are taken with love for her, for by love indeed you created her."

### *The Dialogue of St Catherine of Siena, of Discretion*

*'Her dignity is that of her creation, seeing that she is in the image of God, and this has been given her by grace, and not as her due. In that same mirror of the goodness of God, the soul knows her own indignity, which is the consequence of her own fault'.*

*'What made you establish man in so great a dignity? Certainly the **incalculable love** by which you have looked on your creature in yourself! You are taken with love for her; for by love indeed you created her, by love you have given her a being capable of tasting your eternal Good'.*

## Fundamentalist Christian views and non-religious views about the value of human life

Most human beings are in agreement that human life is special and worthy of protection.

'The child, by reason of its physical and mental immaturity, need special safeguard and care, including appropriate **legal protection before as well as after birth**'

(United Nations Declaration of Human Rights)

For religious believers, human life is considered to be sacred or holy because it has come from God.

This idea is known as the **Sanctity of Life**.

Since all life originates from God and is precious, it should be valued and protected, not destroyed.

## What is abortion?

Abortion is the deliberate ending of a pregnancy.

Before 1967 thousands of illegal or 'back street' abortions were carried out each year and led to serious injury and sometimes the death of the woman.

In 1967 Abortion was legalised up to 28 weeks, along as certain criteria were met:



Two doctors must agree that

- there is a risk to the physical or mental health of the mother
- there is a risk to the physical or mental health of her existing family or
- the woman's life is in danger or
- there is a substantial risk that the baby will be born with a physical or mental disability.

In 1990 The Abortion Act lowered the number of weeks to 24.

In rare cases if the woman's life is at risk or there is the likelihood of severe abnormality in the foetus, then there is no time limit on abortion.

## Attitudes towards abortion



Abortion is a highly controversial issue.

Arguments on both side of the debate centre around three main issues;

### 1. Preserving Life

Many people believe it is always wrong to take a human life, including the life of the unborn. But there are many different views on when life actually begins:

- The moment of conception?
- When implantation occurs?
- When the first movements are felt in the womb?
- As the heart starts to beat?
- When it is born?



### 2. Quality of Life

There are those that argue that the issue isn't whether the foetus is a life or not, but whether having the child will adversely affect the quality of life of the mother or the child.

If the mother is going to suffer mentally or physically by having the child, so for example, if the mother has been raped or if the child will be born with severe disabilities, some argue that it is kinder to have an abortion in these circumstances.

### 3. Rights and Responsibilities

#### Pro- life.

Some people believe that every human has a right to life, even an embryo and potential parents should take responsibility for bringing new life in to the world.

#### Pro -choice

Others believe that the important issue is that the woman has the right to do what she wants with her body and that includes having an abortion.



Currently, in law the father has no legal rights.

# The Catholic Church and abortion

## 1. Preserving Life

- The Catholic Church is **against abortion in all circumstances** because human life is sacred.
- The Catholic Church teaches that life begins at conception.
- It is God who gives life at this moment and it is the start of a human being's relationship with God.
- This life is often described as 'a life with potential' rather than a potential life.



"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."  
Jeremiah 1.5

Abortion is seen as **murder**, which is against one of the Ten Commandments: 'Do not murder'.

**Principle of Double Effect:** The Church values the life of both mother and child. If a mother's life is in danger during the pregnancy then the Church supports action to save the life of the mother even if it threatens or destroys the life of the unborn child. eg ectopic pregnancy or when the mother might need treatment for cancer such as chemotherapy. This is seen as morally justifiable by the Church because:

- the intention is to save the mother's life.
- the secondary unintended effect is that the unborn child may lose its life.

## 2. Quality of Life

The Church values all life even if a person is disabled. All life is equally valuable because it has been given by God and every life is special and unique.



Continuing with a pregnancy might affect the quality of life of the mother, father or child - The Church teaches that **the whole community has a responsibility**. Parents, family and friends have an important role to play in providing love and compassion as well as emotional and practical support to women and couples who are considering an abortion.

## 3. Rights and Responsibilities

'From the time the ovum is fertilised, a new life is begun which is neither that of the father nor of the mother . . .It would never become human if it were not human already.'

*(The Roman Catholic Declaration on Procured Abortion 1973)*

- an unborn child is not just a part of its mother's body.
- From the moment of conception it is a separate individual and a person with its own rights, even though it is reliant on its mother's body for life.
- The Church would encourage them to have the child adopted if they are unable to be a parent.

## The Anglican Church and Abortion

The Anglican Church is also strongly against Abortion. They also encourage adoption as a consideration in these cases.

Anglicans believe in the sanctity of human life.

BUT, they do say there may be situations where having an abortion would be better than having the child. This is sometimes referred to as '**the lesser of two evils**'. The conditions where this might be the case include;

- if the mother's life is in danger, abortion is allowed but not encouraged. It should be carried out as early as possible.
- abortion is permitted if a woman has been raped because of the effect on her ongoing quality of life
- if the child is likely to be severely disabled. However, if this is the case there should be some certainty that the child would only have survived for a very short period of time.

The Anglican Church also calls for better sex education as a solution to unwanted pregnancies.



Some Christians may support abortion in some cases as it may be considered "**the most loving thing**" to do.

## Humanist views on the value of life and abortion

Humanism is based on this life, the here and now, as Humanists do not believe in God. For a humanist, this life is precious because it is the only one there is. Moral decisions should be based on what will allow all involved to live a full and happy life. They believe this because it makes sense, and because they believe in personal choice and respecting others.

There is no one humanist view on abortion but they tend to take a more liberal 'Pro-choice approach' and accept abortion as a morally acceptable choice. Humanists;

- do not consider life sacred (though they do believe it is special) but think that 'quality of life' outweighs preservation of life
- do not think a foetus is a person until well after conception
- encourage careful consideration of both long term and short term affects before a decision is made
- say adoption as a possible alternative that might bring about greater happiness
- support the legalisation of abortion so that unsafe, illegal abortions don't take place
- believe better sex education and easier access to contraception would reduce the number of abortions

## Speciesism

### Peter Singer -a humanist's view

A well- known Australian humanist and moral philosopher, Peter Singer, has controversial ideas about Abortion and the value of life.

### Non- person humans

Singer agrees with the Catholic position that life begins at conception. BUT he describes this life as 'biological' and denies that embryos are 'persons'.

According to Singer a human person is a being that can reason, feel, hope and make moral choices.

So, embryos, new born babies, those in a coma and the elderly with dementia are all examples of biological, but 'non-human persons'.

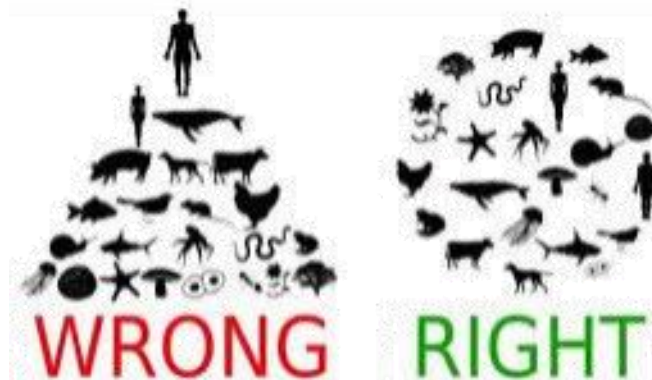
It is morally acceptable to kill these 'non-human persons' if it will bring about less suffering and greater happiness for all involved.

Singer does not believe human life is more special than any other type of life (speciesism). He believes that treating animals as less important than humans is discriminatory and 'speciesist', in the same way that discriminating against people because of their colour is racist.

Singer argues that animals have similar responses to humans, in that they feel pleasure and pain and therefore their interests must be taken in to account.

A conscious animal such as a cat, has more mental capacity and is more of a 'person' than an infant baby or an elderly person with dementia.

Singer argues that speciesism is therefore, morally wrong.



## A Catholic response to Singer's views

Catholics would argue that since **God gives humans a soul**, they are and remain **'persons'** whether they are conscious or not, even when they are asleep, in a coma or haven't yet been born.

In response to Singer's views on speciesism:

- Catholics would **agree that human beings should respect and care for animals**, since they are God's creatures and part of his creation.
- However, they make a distinction between animals and humans because **humans have been made in the image of God**.
- Humans therefore have a special dignity that animals don't. Human beings should care for animals and must not inflict unnecessary cruelty, but they can use them for food and clothing.

### Jewish views



For many Jews, God is believed to be the sole creator, giver and taker of life. Genesis (the first book of the Torah) teaches that humans are created in the image of God (Genesis 1 26-27) and life is precious. In the Tenakh there are references to a relationship with God even before birth (Psalm 139) and Jeremiah (1).

The Ten Commandments, believed to have been given to Moses, forbids the taking of a life. The Talmud discusses a number of cases in which mitzvot in the Torah can be disregarded in order to save a human life. This includes working on Shabbat and breaking the fast on Yom Kippur.

There are many different Jewish views concerning abortion. These are often formed by interpretation of religious texts and teachings.

- Some Jews believe as God is creator only He can take life. An important belief in Judaism is pikuach nefesh -the saving of a life. It is taught that 'Anyone who destroys a human life is considered as if he had destroyed an entire world.' In the Ten Commandments it is forbidden to kill and some Jews believe this can refer to the unborn.
- However, most Jews believe that the unborn foetus is not a person until it is born.
- Many Reform Jews believe that abortion can be permitted but only for serious reasons such as the mother's life is at risk.



## SUMMARY

- ✓ God transcends human understanding and he created everything that exists out of nothing because he is omnipotent.
- ✓ God created humans out of love, in his image which makes all human life special (sacred).
- ✓ The Catholic Church accept the creation accounts in *Genesis* as symbolic stories that convey hidden truths and they shouldn't be read literally.
- ✓ The Catholic Church teaches that Science and Religion can be compatible.
- ✓ Scientists such as Stephen Hawking do not see it is necessary for the universe to have been created
- ✓ The Catholic Church accepts Big Bang Theory and Charles Darwin's ideas about evolution as compatible with belief in God
- ✓ The Catholic Church would reject Richard Dawkins' ideas that humans are nothing more than 'vehicles' for their genes
- ✓ In her writings, Catherine of Siena expressed the idea of *imago dei*
- ✓ Views on abortion differ greatly; Catholics and many other Christians believe it is a great moral evil, some Anglicans believe it can be justified in certain circumstances, many Humanists think that 'quality of life' and women's rights issues should be considered
- ✓ Jewish views also vary; many Orthodox Jews see abortion as wrong whilst many Reform Jews might see it as acceptable in certain situations

# CREATION

Remember that Catholics do not believe the biblical accounts are to be interpreted literally, but tell us undeniable truths about God, human beings and the world.

What do the two Creation accounts in Genesis tell us about God?



## Genesis 1

emphasis on the greatness of God as creator of the Universe;

- **Transcendence** - God exists above and beyond creation which makes Him unlike anything else that exists 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' (Gen 1.1)
- **Eternal** - the fact that God creates heaven and earth "In the beginning", shows that he already existed, God has no beginning.
- **Omnipotent** - God is all powerful, creation happens just by him commanding it 'And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.' (Gen 1.3).  
Furthermore, he creates from nothing, Creation ex nihilo, before he creates nothing exists and only God can do this.

## Genesis 2

Many of the themes in Genesis 1 but God also shown as:

- **Omnibenevolent** - God is all loving, the Supreme Being who needs nothing yet he created a universe out of his love. Before he created humans, he created everything they needed to live on, 'Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground-trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.' Gen 2.8-9.
- God does not want man to be lonely so he creates animals to keep him company, and then creates Eve
- **Immanent** - God is involved in his creation, particularly humans and their lives. God talks to Adam; forms him and breaths life in to him; creates woman from Adam's rib; walks in the Garden. Christians today believe God is **omnipresent** - present

## What do the two Creation accounts in Genesis tell us about human beings?

Remember that Catholics do not believe that God made one man and one woman - Adam and Eve represent all humanity.

### Sanctity of life

Genesis 1: Humans are created last and are the high point of God's creation.

Genesis 2: God personally creates Adam and Eve, Adam from the dust of the earth and Eve from Adam's rib. God breathes life in to Adam, showing how precious and sacred human lives are compared to everything else in creation. God reflects again that all that he has made is good which includes human beings.



### Image of God

Humans were created imago Dei-in the image of God, which makes them sacred and holy.

'So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them.' (Gen 1.27)

### Male and female

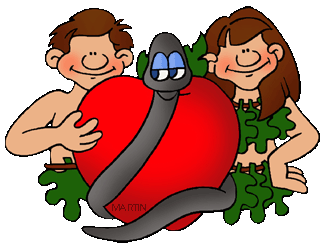
God deliberately creates humans male and female, he wants Adam to have a companion in the second story; in Genesis 1 humans are encouraged to "Be fruitful and increase in number."

'The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh.' Gen 2. 23-24

### Freewill

God gives Adam and Eve freedom to do God's will or to choose not to, 'And the LORD God commanded the man, " You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." '(Gen 2.16-17).

Although God tells Adam not to eat from the tree, he gives him the choice to disobey him.



### Stewards of God's Creation

God commands that humans have authority over nature but also have a responsibility to care for it.

Genesis 1: God creates humans to rule over his creatures.

Genesis 2: Adam is put in the garden to 'work it and take care of it' but is seen to be in charge when God asks him to name all the animals.



## Catholic beliefs about humans and their relationship with creation

The effects of human needs in the environment - increased transport, factories and the pollution they cause, among other harmful practices such as deforestation- has damaged the ozone layer. The fine balance of gases surrounding the earth has been disturbed, leading to climate change.



**Climate Change** threatens the existence of many different species and is having a devastating effect on hundreds of millions of people worldwide.

The effects of climate change with more unpredictable and extreme weather has a greater impact on the world's poor because they are already vulnerable.

90% of people who die in natural disasters live in the poorest countries.

Climate change is not **just an environmental issue but a justice issue too.**

Pope Francis, in his encyclical **Laudato Si'**, encourages Catholics :

- to take care of the earth, our common home and
- think about the gift they have been given and
- to consider what type of world they will be passing on to future generations.
- we need to look beyond what we want and think about the effects of our actions on the environment.

'Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realise that **the world is a gift** which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit.' . *Laudato Si'* 159

Catholics want to take care of the planet in many different ways, at an individual, local and global level.

In **Laudato Si'**, Pope Francis has suggested practical ways people can do this:

- "avoiding the use of plastic and paper,
- reducing water consumption,
- separating refuse,
- cooking only what can reasonably be consumed,
- showing care for other living beings,
- using public transport or car-pooling,
- planting trees,
- turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices."



Other reasons the Catholic Church gives for caring for the environment include;

➤ **Love your neighbour as yourself**

Catholics need to care about people in other countries who bear the brunt of the most devastating effects of climate change through floods, storms and drought.

"Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen."

1 John 4:20

Those that we don't know but still must show love for include those not even born yet; 'we do not inherit the earth from our parents, we borrow it from our children'.



➤ **The Common Good**

Every individual has a duty to contribute to the good of society; the common good.

Catholics should act justly and seek justice for others, especially the poor. This is likely to lead to good things for everyone because everyone will benefit from living in a well cared for, healthy environment.

➤ **Universal destination of Goods**

We don't own the earth - our current generation are looking after it to pass on to future generations.

One of the commandments is 'You shall not steal' (Exodus 20:15) and a refusal to look after the planet is stealing from future generations.

"The seventh commandment forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of one's neighbour and wronging him in any way with respect to his goods. It commands justice and charity in the care of earthly goods and the fruits of people's labour. For the sake of the common good, it requires respect for the universal destination of goods." (CCC 2401)



## Humanist Views

Humanists share many beliefs about the environment with Catholics.

Their beliefs are different to Catholic beliefs in three main ways:

### 1. 'Good without God'.

Humanists agree with the idea of stewardship. They believe;

- ✓ More should be done to preserve habitats and species because if they are lost then we may be damaging ourselves without realising it.
- ✓ We should care about the future of our planet because we should care about other human beings, even those not born yet.



Their ideas are different to Catholics because Humanists want to live good lives because they believe it is the only life we have. They believe this because it makes sense, and because they believe in respecting others. Their views are not based on belief in a supernatural being or beings (God).

### 2. Population control

Humanists see population growth and overcrowding of the planet as a major threat to life on earth.

- ✓ a growing population increases the demand for food, water, shelter and fuel as well as more material possessions and wealth.
- ✓ This can increase tension and even lead to war which then threatens the happiness and safety of humans
- ✓ They believe in Birth control programmes to limit population growth.



This goes against Catholic views that God wants humans to flourish as seen in *Genesis* and over simplifies the issue - there are enough resources for everyone if shared out fairly.

### 3. Speciesism

Increasingly humanists see the idea that human beings are more important than other animals as wrong, in the same way that racism or sexism is wrong. eg Singer.

- Bees are under threat. Approx. a third of all the food we eat such as fruit and vegetables, have been pollinated by bees. Treating animals equally to humans makes sense to for our future survival.

Other humanists might go further and say that animals have equal rights to humans.

This is goes against Catholic views as they believe humans are special and holy because of the way they were created by God, in his image, as described in *Genesis*.





## Jewish views

God is the source of all life and referred to throughout the Torah as the sole creator. Prayers are said in Orthodox synagogues expressing this belief, 'Blessed be He who spoke and the world existed.' For many Jews the universe is too wonderful and complex to have happened by chance.

In the first book of the Torah, God gave humans a duty to take control over nature (Genesis 1. 26-28). Many Jews believe it is their responsibility to continue the work of creation by making the world a better place to live in. This is referred to as Tikkun Olam (healing the world). This includes not wasting or destroying the environment (bal tashchit), not causing stress to living creatures and not causing pollution or harm to trees. This can be seen in the Torah when soldiers are told not to destroy trees in war.

Many Jewish festivals celebrate God's creation, such as Sukkot which is a harvest festival. The keeping of Sukkot is a mitzvah (duty or obligation). Living in the Sukkah (a temporary shelter often made of leaves and plants) during the festival is a reminder of human connection with nature and the environment.

Jewish people also have a festival where they plant trees (Tu BiShvat - New Year of the Trees/Ecological Awareness Day). Trees are vital to the well-being of our environment and the damage caused by having too few trees can be seen in the rainforests of South America which have suffered significant deforestation.

## SUMMARY

- ✓ Christians believe the earth belongs to God, not humans
- ✓ The two accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 show different aspects of God
- ✓ Humans should act as good stewards of the earth to preserve God's gift for future generations
- ✓ Humanists also believe that humans should respect and protect the planet, though they do not accept the concept of being a steward for God
- ✓ Jews also believe in the importance of respecting and protecting the planet for God and for the benefit of future generations

# THE BIBLE

- The Bible is the **source of Christianity's main beliefs**
- The Bible has been **inspired in some way by God**.
- The Bible is a **collection of different books** written by many authors over a period of more than a thousand years.



**Oral Tradition** - In early times the stories of Abraham, Moses and the prophets were shared by word of mouth as people couldn't read or write. Scribes began to write down parts of the oral tradition from around 1,000 BC. In the same way the stories of Jesus were not recorded straight away as the first Christians believed the end of the world was coming any minute. When they realised that this was not the case and that eye witnesses were dying out, they began to write things down.

**Canon of Scripture** - the accepted version of the Bible was agreed, after much discussion, by Pope Damascus in the 4th century. The accepted list of the books that make up the Bible in the Catholic tradition is called the Canon of Scripture.

## How the Bible is structured

The Bible is divided into two large sections called the Old and New Testament. The word 'testament' means 'covenant' which is an agreement between two different groups.

### The Old Testament

- has 46 books (Catholic Canon)
- is about the relationship between God and the Jewish people before Jesus.



**Law**- the first five books form the Pentateuch. These books give instructions on how to live life according to God and contain the Ten Commandments.

**History**- Joshua, Samuel and Chronicles are some of the books that trace the history of God's people from when they entered the Promised Land,.

**Prophets** - a prophet is a messenger sent by God to inspire and challenge those who are failing to stay faithful to God; eg Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel.

**Wisdom** - these books encourage people to stay close to God in their lives and come in the form of songs, poetry, prayers and sayings.

### The New Testament

- has 27 (Catholic Canon)
- is about the life of Jesus and the growth of the early Church.



**Gospels** - the books of 'Good News' of Jesus' life. The four Gospel writers were Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

**Acts of the Apostles** - the growth of the early Church

**Letters**- which were written by early Christian leaders like Peter and Paul to encourage, guide and sometimes rebuke people in the Church.

**Book of Revelation**- written by John, this is an apocalyptic book, full of symbolism that some Christians believe refer to the end of the world.





## Revelation and Inspiration

'All scripture is inspired by God'  
(2 Timothy 3:16)

- The Bible is the 'word of God',
  - God shows us what he is like through the Bible.
- 
- God speaks to us through the Bible, showing us **how to live**.
  - Christians believe **that God reveals himself to humans in other forms too**, eg through creation, through other people and most importantly, in the person of Jesus.
  - God's Holy Spirit guided the writers of the Bible.
  - Christians believe that God continues to send his spirit to guide people towards goodness and truth today, this is known as **inspiration**.
  - So, the Bible is 'the word of God'; meaning that the Holy Spirit inspired believers to accept God's message in their lives and in turn to share it with others.



## Interpreting the Bible

### The Catholic view:

- the authors of the Bible were inspired and gained truthful insights about God but that not everything they wrote was historically or literally accurate, eg their understanding of science was very limited.
- to fully understand what God wants to tell us, we must look at the **context** in which it was written and the **literary form** used; a poem is very different from a piece of historical writing. For Catholics, the accounts given in Genesis 1-3 can be considered myth; stories that, whilst not being 'true', contain great 'truths'.

'In order to discover the sacred authors' intention, the reader must take in to account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in used at the time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating the current'.  
(CCC110)

### Other Christian views:

- Fundamentalists believe that God inspired the biblical writers, so it does not contain any errors.
- Some Fundamentalists are literalists- everything in the Bible is literally true.



## Jewish views

### The Torah

The Torah is the first five books of the Tenakh (Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim) and is believed to be the holiest and most authoritative scripture for Jews. Moses is believed to have received the Torah from God on Mount Sinai.

The many different views amongst Jews come from their beliefs about the Torah.

- For some they believe it was given by God to Moses and as such must be taken literally and not changed. Many Orthodox Jews will seek to obey the mitzvot as duties in life. Society may change but Jewish teachings don't. One of Maimonides' (a Jewish teacher) principles was that the Torah was given in its entirety to Moses and can never be changed.
- For many Reform and Liberal Jews, it is not necessary to take the scriptures literally and they believe that sometimes they have to be adapted for modern life.

### The Oral Torah

For many Orthodox Jews, the Oral Torah is also considered as source of authority. Believed to be God's words revealed to Moses and passed down to successors to form the **Mishnah** and **Talmuds**.

Many Reform Jews may refer to the Oral Torah but not see it as a source of divine authority.

## SUMMARY

- ✓ The Bible was inspired by God and is an important source of authority for Christians
- ✓ God has made himself known through the Bible; he has revealed his love for all of humanity and has given them guidance on how to live a life according to his laws
- ✓ The Bible contains many different kinds of literature, written by many different people over a very long period of time.
- ✓ Christians have different views about how to interpret the writings in the Bible; Catholics accept the idea of biblical myth, whilst most Fundamental Christians do not
- ✓ The Catholic Church teaches that the Bible should be read in context, not just as a piece of historical writing
- ✓ There is also diversity within Judaism regarding the nature of divinely inspired scripture

## Expressing beliefs through Art

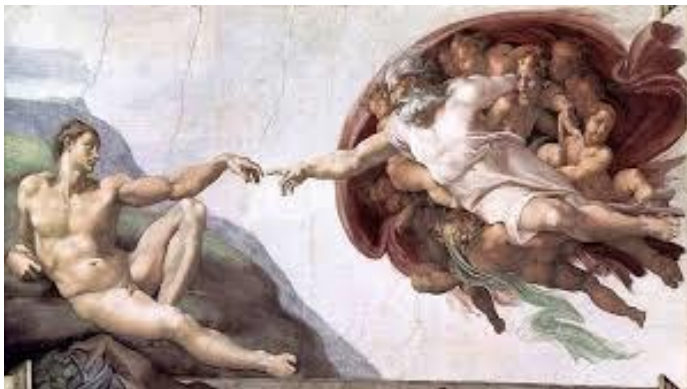
There are many different ways in which people express their religious beliefs and faith.

They may:

- pray, meditate or take part in an act of worship
- chose to help others by supporting a charity or doing other good works
- respond to a 'call' from God to follow a vocation as a nun or priest, teacher or social worker
- express their beliefs about the meaning of life and the nature of God creatively through art, literature or music. Originally, paintings and stained glass were important ways to share Bible stories and key Catholic beliefs with the many ordinary people that could not read or write.

### Michelangelo's Creation of Adam

How does the painting express Catholic beliefs about creation, God and human beings?



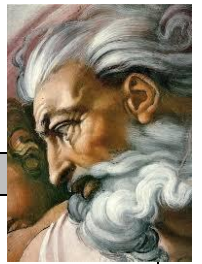
Painted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome,

It was painted somewhere between 1508 and 1512 and was commissioned by Pope Julius II.

**1. Adam** - Adam is lying back on the earth from which he has been formed as told in *Genesis*, "Then the LORD God formed a man from dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." (Gen 2. 7)

detail	Catholic belief
Adam = a perfect human being; young, handsome and strong.	everything that God created was good,
Adam resembles God - same physical build, similar pose and details like arms, shoulders and feet are almost identical	humans are made in the image of God: imago Dei.
Adam is a laid back figure, his arm resting on his knee, suggesting that he is not fully alive yet. He is barely reaching out to God	humans need God's grace to do what God asks.

## 2. God



detail	Catholic belief
God is a dynamic, active figure as if He is hard at work at His greatest creation. God reaches out to the more passive figure of Adam	God loves the world. God loves Adam / humanity
God is a much older being; bearded yet strong and powerful in His body.	God is both eternal and all powerful; he is responsible for all of creation which He made from nothing, because nothing existed before God
Difference in age between Adam and God	parent- child relationship that exists between God and humanity, indeed God is the Father of all Creation

## 3. The hands



detail	Catholic belief
Adam's arm still limp	Humans are waiting for the spark of life given to all humans by God -human life is sacred and a gift from God.
Adam's fingers are bent	Need God to strengthen and straighten them
Adam and God are reaching out to touch each other with their fingertips.	a close, loving relationship between God and humanity.

## 4. The cloud

detail	Catholic belief
God being carried towards earth by a group of angels	transcendence of God and his greatness and majesty
Shape of cloud	?the brain - the message is that God is the source of all knowledge and wisdom- He is omniscient
	?a womb because of the red background & green umbilical cord - God gives all life,

## SUMMARY

Michelangelo has expressed Catholic beliefs about creation, God and human beings in his 'Creation of Adam', by including allusions to the idea that God is the eternal, all powerful, Creator ex nihilo, that creation is good, and that humans are God's greatest creation.

## Symbolism and Imagery in Christian Art

To understand the meaning behind any piece of art you need to understand the symbolism.

This involves working out the meaning that the artist is trying to show through the images that have been used.



### The Tree of Life Mosaic

The Tree of Life Mosaic in the Church of San Clemente in Rome is an example of Christian symbolism. It was created by Masolino da Panicale in the 12th century.

The central image is one of Christ on the Cross but there are many other symbolic images:

#### ➤ The Twelve Apostles

- specially chosen by Jesus to continue to spread the Good News once he had left them.

#### ➤ The Lamb

- at the bottom of the cross there are twelve lambs who are pointing towards a thirteenth lamb at the centre of the picture directly under the Cross. This central lamb has a



halo and is representing Christ whom Christians refer to as the 'Lamb of God'.

-In the story of the Exodus, a lamb was sacrificed and its blood put on the doorposts of the homes of the Israelites, remembered every year in the Pasover.

- Jesus is described the 'Lamb of God' because his sacrificial death saved humanity from their sin and death..

- The Apostles also lived a sacrificial life, they gave up their homes and families to follow Jesus and spread the word after his death. For some, it also literally cost them their lives, for example St Peter was executed in Rome.



#### ➤ The Dove

-On the cross itself there are twelve doves which again represent the Apostles but also the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came to the Apostles at Pentecost, were filled with courage and began to spread the word.

Additional important figures in Church History appear throughout the scene including the four evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), who were so instrumental in spreading the Good News. They appear at the top next to the image of a living, risen Jesus.



### Representations of Jesus

As well as the symbol of the Cross, Jesus is represented in different ways.

The two symbols Chi-Rho and the Alpha and Omega are combined into one at the top of the cross.



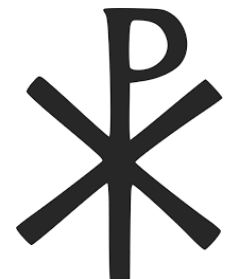
**The Alpha and Omega** - In the book of Revelation the Greek letters Alpha and Omega are used several times to symbolise Christ.

**Α Ω**

They are the **first and last letters of the Greek alphabet** which express the idea of something being **complete**.

In the book of Revelation, God speaks of himself as the Alpha and Omega. From early Christian times this symbol was also used to refer to Jesus. We are therefore being reminded that Jesus shares the eternity of God.

**Chi-Rho** -this symbol is frequently used in Catholic Churches today on baptismal candles and the priest's vestments. The symbol looks like the letters X and P which are **the first two letters of the word Christ in Greek**. With the use of both of these symbols the artist is emphasising the importance of Christ.



### The symbol of cross as the tree of life

- The cross is a complete crucifixion scene with Mary and St. John present either side of the cross.
- The hand of God the Father is reaching down to earth from heaven handing a crown to Christ.
- This symbolises how the transcendent (outside time and space) God becomes an immanent (involved in the world) God who is now involved in creation in Jesus.



## The Cross

Jesus is placed on a black cross but this emphasises the brightness of his figure set against it.

Jesus' sacrifice is about life not death, hope not despair.



## The Tree of Life



The Cross is coming from the tree of life.

'On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations'. Book of Revelation 22.2

All people are saved through the crucifixion.

Also a possible reminder of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. The message is that sin ruins life on earth as well as the relationship between God and humans.

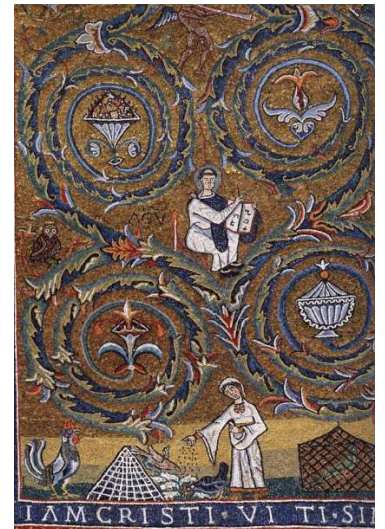
## The Vine

A green vine covers the entire scene, coming from the tree of life.

This is another reminder of the Garden of Eden and the paradise that was created for all of humanity.

The Vine can also represent Christ himself who said 'I am the Vine'. (John .5)

The Vine is labelled as the Church by an inscription along the band just above the sheep: 'We have likened the Church of Christ to this vine; the Law made it wither but the Cross made it bloom'.



## SUMMARY

- ✓ God the Father created the whole universe
- ✓ God the Son, Jesus, dies on the cross to redeem the sins of humanity
- ✓ The sacrifice of Jesus is a source of hope and life
- ✓ All people are saved through the crucifixion, despite original sin

## LOVING AND SERVING IN CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES IN BRITAIN AND ELSEWHERE

What rights, if any, do all humans possess?



Many people would turn to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) for an answer to this question.

The declaration contains 30 articles that represent the rights that all humans should have.

They include the right to:

- life, freedom and personal safety
- a standard of living that ensures good health and well-being, including access to food, clothing, housing and medical care and social services
- an education, employment and leisure time
- freedom of movement and residence in their own country, the right to seek and experience asylum from persecution in other countries.

All thirty articles are based on the first:

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

### What is Social Justice?

Social justice is having a just and fair society where everyone regardless of their sex, age, race, religion or country of origin have the same basic necessities for life.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the way many countries do this. It's legally binding all over the world.

For many Christians, the UN Declaration of Human Rights reflects the main principles of Christianity and what 'Loving your neighbour' looks like in practice.





## Catholic Social Teaching - The Church speaks out

Over the centuries many **popes have spoken out** about the social issues of their day after having reflected on God's word in the Scriptures.

They have often done this through **encyclicals** (letters), and these have become known as **Catholic Social Teaching**.

The first modern instance = 1891 when Pope Leo XIII spoke out in support of oppressed factory workers who were demanding justice from their reluctant employers.



### **Gaudium et Spes**

**At the heart of Catholic Social Teaching = belief that humans have been created in the image and likeness of God.**

Since humans are made in the image of God they are all God's children and possess special dignity. So we must work for equality for all and to not rest until all of God's children experience peace and justice and every type of discrimination is eliminated.

People experience a lack of peace in their lives because of

1. war and conflict - they can lose their homes, jobs, education and health.
2. in families - tension due to worry over money, addiction, family breakup
3. personal conflict - trauma caused by bullying, racism, anxiety, depression, mental health problems.

Until there is peace, people will continue to suffer and Catholics believe we have a duty to work to remove all conflict.

### **Imago Dei: Gaudium et Spes 29**

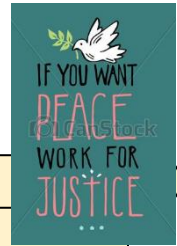
Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God's likeness, since they have the same nature and origin, have been redeemed by Christ and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny, the **basic equality of all** must receive increasingly greater recognition.

... every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent... At the same time let them put up a stubborn fight against any kind of slavery, whether social or political, and **safeguard the basic rights of man** under every political system.

"There will be no peace or justice in the world until we return to a sense of our dignity as creatures and children of God." Pope John XXIII

The message for Pope John XXIII is echoed in *Gaudium et Spes* where a link is made between peace and justice.

There can't be true peace in the world unless there is justice first.



Imago Dei: *Gaudium et Spes* 78

Peace is not merely the absence of war; ...Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice... peace on earth cannot be obtained unless personal well-being is safeguarded and men freely and trustingly share with one another the riches of their inner spirits and their talents. A firm determination to respect other men and peoples and their dignity...absolutely necessary for the establishment of peace. Hence peace is likewise the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can provide.

### Working for reconciliation

- People are sometimes tempted to get revenge when they are angry about the way they have been treated.
- Righteous anger - like Jesus in the temple- can be justified.
- But it can make achieving peace after a conflict difficult
- True peace, however, can only be reached by reconciliation, healing the pain and bringing both sides together. Eg when Nelson Mandela was released from 27 years of captivity on Robben Island many people wanted him to look for revenge. Instead, he chose to fight for equality without bitterness towards his captors.



"If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner"  
Nelson Mandela

### How can Catholics help to bring about peace and justice?

Catholic Social Teaching asks everyone to treat other people with dignity and to take action when needed by:

- upholding the rights of individuals
- standing in solidarity alongside those who are oppressed and
- caring for respect and care for the planet and the environment
- praying for justice and peace for all



## Called to serve - faith in action

Since becoming Pope in 2013, Pope Francis has done things differently;

- choosing to live in a guesthouse in the Vatican rather than the papal apartments
- choosing to travel on public transport.
- going to a young offenders' institute in Rome on Maundy Thursday to wash the feet of ten young men and two women at the Mass of the Lord's Supper. He knelt before them and washed, dried and kissed their feet in a symbolic act of service. He washed the feet of inmates of different nationalities and faiths.

Pope Francis' actions send a very clear message out to the world that everyone is called to serve, because Jesus told us to 'love one another', regardless of race, gender or religion



## Britain: A multi-faith society

Britain has always been a multi-ethnic and multi-faith society;

- Over the centuries, Saxons, Danes, and Vikings have all settled in Britain, each bringing their own culture and belief system.
- The UK has always provided refuge for those suffering persecution, this has included French Protestants in the 17th century and European Jews in the last century.
- During the 19th century, the British Empire included many countries across the world. Citizens from the Empire were allowed to settle in Britain. Small communities grew in British cities as a result and included those who had been slaves in their country of origin until they came to Britain and were given their freedom.
- As countries gained independence from Britain, the Empire became known as the Commonwealth. After the Second World War in the 1950s many immigrants were invited to Britain from Commonwealth countries such as India, Pakistan, the Caribbean and West Africa because there was a shortage of workers in Britain. Many of these immigrants had fought for Britain in the war. The British Armed forces relied heavily on those from the Commonwealth who fought with them and they actually outnumbered the British
- Immigration has continued due to the free movement of many from the European Union to Britain.

In Britain today all faiths have an equal right to exist together and to practice or change their religion.

Not every person in Britain is a person of faith. In the 2011 census, about a quarter of the population, 14.1 million people, said they have no religion.



## What is Inter-faith dialogue?

'Dialogue' means co-operative, constructive and positive engagement between people of different faiths and of no faith such as humanists and atheists, to:

- promote mutual understanding, respect, tolerance and harmony
- identify common ground
- engage in shared action for the common good of society

'Inter-faith Dialogue' relates to engagement between those of all faiths.

More recently, the term 'interpath dialogue' has become more common, which is favoured by some humanists, atheists and agnostics because this term does not exclude them.



**Benefits** of living in a multi faith society:

- a variety of food, clothes, music, and literature in to our lives.
- new ways of living and enjoying life.
- greater tolerance, respect and understanding towards those who have a different viewpoint to us.
- This leads to harmony and a safe, happy society.

**Challenges** of living in a more diverse society:

- religious tensions can sometimes lead to persecution, hatred and violence.
- those who are from other ethnic backgrounds, or different faiths, can sometimes experience racism and discrimination.

- When times are hard those from other faiths and ethnicities can become scapegoats and are seen by some as part of the problem, leading to intolerance and hatred.
- with the current rise in extremism innocent members of certain faith groups eg Muslims, can experience prejudice and be treated with a lack of respect.

Since the Referendum of 2016 when Britain voted to leave the European Union, racial and religiously motivated hate crime has risen significantly in Britain.

### Promoting Community Cohesion

This includes the Inter Faith network, the Forum of Faiths, the Council of Christians and Jews and the Muslim Council of Britain.

The aim of community cohesion = to build a better society where all groups feel that they belong and can live peacefully together.

To achieve community cohesion everyone must:

- listen to each other,
- respect differences,
- recognise common features between faiths and
- promote shared values of tolerance and respect.



### The Catholic Church and Inter-faith dialogue

Recent Popes have asked for understanding, tolerance and respect between the different faith groups and Catholics play an active role on many inter-faith committees.

'Together with all people of good will, we aspire to peace. That is why I insist once again: interreligious and intercultural research and dialogue are not an option but a vital need for our time.' [Pope Benedict XVI February 2007]

In the 1960s, Pope Paul VI spoke to the Church through the document *Nostra Aetate*, a statement on the relationship of the Catholic Church to non-Christian Religions. One part said that Jews should not be blamed for the death of Christ - in the past some people have blamed Jews for the death of Jesus on the cross.

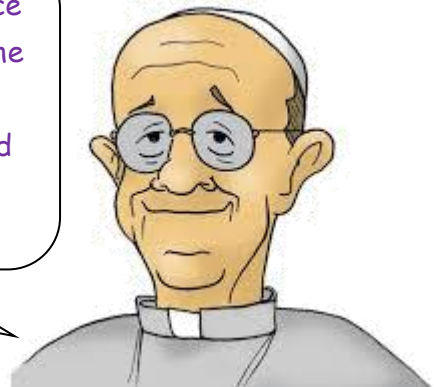
'The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men. . . We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God.'

Pope Paul VI

## The work of Catholic Charities

- In a world population of around 7.3 billion, 1.3 billion live in extreme poverty, living on less than a pound a day, 1.1 billion people in developing countries don't have access to clean water and 1.6 billion live without electricity.
- Around 22,000 children die every day due to the effects of poverty; hunger, lack of sanitation and access to clean water
- Infectious diseases that can easily be cured, such as Diarrhoea, cause the death of 1.8 million children every year
- In the UK, in a classroom of 30, 9 children are living in poverty
- Pope Francis warns of becoming immune to statistics and failing to see the human lives and their genuine suffering behind them.

'Poverty has a face! It has the face of a child; it has the face of a family; it has the face of people, young and old. It has the face of widespread unemployment and lack of opportunity. It has the face of forced migrations, and of empty or destroyed homes.' (June 2016)



## The preferential option for the poor

'Feed the people dying of hunger, because if you do not feed them you are killing them.'

(Gaudium et Spes 69)

Catholics have a duty to work against the forces in society that create poverty. Catholics have a **duty to put the poorest and most vulnerable people first**. This is what the term 'preferential option for the poor' means.

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus teaches that we must 'feed the hungry, care for the sick, welcome the stranger' and that 'Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me'.



## The Work of the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development- CAFOD

CAFOD is the official aid agency for the Catholic Church in England and Wales.



CAFOD works with local churches and other partners in places like Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, to tackle injustice and poverty.

**CAFOD's mission is to overcome poverty.** They do this by working with **local partners** to plan programmes together.

- They fund projects for **long term change** in communities such as; providing seeds, tools and machinery for food production, materials to build wells for clean water, education, hospitals and health care programmes, training in skills and advocacy.
- **Respond** in times of an **emergency** such as an earthquake, flood, drought or war.. CAFOD, will provide food, water, shelter and medicine.
- **Educate** people on the causes of poverty and injustice so that lasting change can be achieved. CAFOD provides resources for schools and parishes to use to raise awareness of issues and as an inspiration for prayer and worship.
- **Campaign** and challenge those in positions of power such as governments and businesses to ensure their policies and practices are just and fair. eg 'Make Poverty History' which united 31 million people globally to unite and call for action against poverty, As a result, world leaders pledged to increase aid spending and the G8 agreed to cancel some of the remaining debt owed to the World Bank by some of the poorest countries in the world.
- **Fundraise** in schools and churches. CAFOD organises two Family Fast days a year.



**BRIGHTEN  
UP** *this* **HARVEST**

## Faith in action



The parable of the Good Samaritan inspires Christians because Jesus says at the end of the story:

'Go and do the same.'

CAFOD believes in the intrinsic dignity of every person. This belief is shown by:

- The fact that CAFOD works with everyone, whatever their gender, race, religion or political views.
- They welcome support from everyone including from people of other faiths and those with none.
- Enabling people to support their own families and give something back to their communities by teaching skills.

### Care for our Common Home

Poverty and the environment are closely linked.

Sustainable development which protects the environment, as well as promoting human development, is at the heart of CAFOD's work.

Their campaign, "One Climate, One World", was organised in response to the needs of the poorest communities and Pope Francis' call to care for 'our common home'.

CAFOD's campaign contributed to a climate deal in Paris (Dec 2015) which agreed a path towards:

- a low carbon future
- global temperature increases no greater than 2 degrees centigrade
- financial support for poorer countries to cope with the impact of climate change which disproportionately affects them





## The Work of the St Vincent De Paul Society

Commonly known as the SVP and inspired by St Vincent de Paul and the Vincentian approach to justice.

They aim to provide practical help to those who are suffering in whatever form. Many parishes and schools - including Brownedge - have an SVP group.



'The knowledge of social well-being and of reform can be learned not from books, nor from the public platform, but in climbing the stairs to the poor person's garret, sitting by their bedside, feeling the same cold that pierces them, sharing the secrets of their lonely hearts and troubled minds.'  
(Blessed Frederic Ozanam)

### Inspired by Christ's call to 'Love your neighbour'

The SVP is inspired by Jesus' message to 'love our neighbour as ourselves.' They do this by:

- visiting individuals and families at home, in hospital or hospices, residential homes and young offender institutes. The aim of the visits is to show they care and make sure that people who are vulnerable don't feel lonely and isolated. Visitors may also help with practical tasks such as shopping, gardening or filling out official forms.
- running support centres providing a range of services such as counselling, training in basic literacy and numeracy and debt advice.
- organising soup runs, providing warm drinks, food and companionship.
- protecting the environment by encouraging people to donate pieces of furniture, instead of throwing them away, so they can be recycled and given to people who need them.
- showing compassion to those they work with by not judging them.
- being generous with their time, possessions and selves in the service of others.

### Human Dignity

The SVP respect the dignity of each person they work with because they believe that they are all equal.

The SVP helps people in need regardless of their colour, race, faith, status or sexual orientation.

They help homeless people, single parent families, the socially isolated and asylum seekers.

## SUMMARY

- ✓ Over the centuries the Church has spoken out about issues of social justice
- ✓ Since all humans are made in God's image, the Catholic Church calls on people not to rest until there is equality and justice for all
- ✓ The Catholic Church calls people of all faiths to listen to each other, respect differences and recognise their shared values
- ✓ Catholics are active members of inter-faith committees and organisations
- ✓ CAFOD and the SVP are showing God's love to the world in their work with the poor and vulnerable. Their work is based on the idea that all humans deserve respect and dignity because
- ✓ they are made imago dei, that Jesus taught the importance of love of neighbour and that the world is a gift from God that we care for on a temporary basis..

