



Our Beginning

A Study On

Genesis 1-4

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About This Study

Heart of Mary Women's Fellowship is honored to bring you our second year studying the a piece of Genesis. Each New Year, we dive into a piece of the first book of the Bible. This year: Genesis 1-4. You'll want to pull out your Catechism (CCC) for this one! If you don't own a copy, you can reference it [here](#), online for free.

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/epub/index.cfm>

We hope that you'll dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others what beauty God reveals to you through it. If you are doing this study independently, know that we at HOM are here for you & that you also have a LARGE community of women through our website and social media that are participating too! You are truly never alone!

If you are completing this study in a group setting - we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with, on top of our online sisterhood. Please use this study journal for your reference, resource, and more during your meetings and the personal time leading up to it.

Looking for a group? Please visit www.heartofmarywf.com/groups to find a meet up near you.

Are you already in one but not listed on our website? Looking to start one? Please contact us for more information about our "HOM Ambassador" program. We have team members available specifically to help you grow a local group and lead other women through community, prayer, and devotion. Their support is available at all times. We also want to help you grow! We will advertise your group on our website & social media! And we have free resources for you as well. Please email us at heartofmarywf@aol.com

Note: All written content has been reviewed by a Catholic spiritual director to cross check that all statements are align with the teachings and tenants of the Roman Catholic Church.

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Today's Scripture

n/a

Now that Advent is over, even though we are still in the Christmas Season (until the Feast of the Epiphany—one of my favorite feast days!), we're going to go back. WAAAAY back, to the beginning of everything. We're going to dive on in to the first four chapters of Genesis. There's a pretty symmetry, in my opinion, in starting off the new year with the beginning of the Old Testament. On a personal note, I think it is pretty cool that my first contribution to Heart of Mary is the opening of the first book in the Bible. :)

Genesis starts off with a sort of dramatic opening line: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth." BOOM. There it is. God created everything. No small feat, by any means.

As we move onward through Genesis, we're going to see a lot of foreshadowing, a LOT of the first sins, and a lot of God's punishing hand. We walk through the Creation story, where God sets up the entire Earth and everything in/on/around it. Then comes the creation of man, and the Garden of Eden. God plops Adam down in the most beautiful and perfect Garden, giving him dominion over everything. But something was missing. So we get the creation of woman from man, and her subsequent union with man.

God created the Garden of Eden, filled it with everything pretty to look at and tasty to eat, gave Adam (and later Eve) the Garden, and told him to cultivate it, and to not eat from one very SPECIFIC tree. As we all know, Eve lets the serpent tempt and convince her (by encouraging her to be prideful) to eat the fruit, then she gives it to Adam, and we have officially fallen from grace. This is SUCH a huge bummer, which seems like the understatement of eternity.

I remember thinking when I was a child how SELFISH Eve was, for giving us all original sin and everything that comes with it, just to eat a stupid fruit because a snake told her to. While Grown-Up Mandi understands it a little more than Child Mandi did, I still sometimes think it would have just been so much easier to not have sin. No work, no school, we'd all just be happily frolicking around the Garden of Eden with God. God literally gave them ONE THING to not do, and that's what they did. I do have to feel compassion for Eve, though, because I cannot even count the number of times I've had "one thing," to do or not do, and failed at it by my own choices. I'm sure we can all relate.

Adam and Eve then have to make their way outside of the Garden, which God has cast them out of, and placed the cherubim with a flaming sword to guard. I used to always picture cherubim as the cute little chunky angels you see in paintings, but I have a feeling these cherubim are a little more fierce than the depictions of babies floating on fluffy clouds we see.

Now that we're stuck OUT of the awesome Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had relations and she gave birth to Cain. Eve then has Abel, his brother. Cain and Abel both place offerings to the Lord, but Abel puts in less effort, and gets less recognition from God for his offering than Cain did. This is the first seed of jealousy we see in the bible. Cain gets so jealous, he kills his own brother.

Towards the end of Chapter 4, Cain settles far from Eden, has a wife, and a child named Enoch. We get some genealogy records, and Adam and Eve have another son, naming him Seth. The end of chapter four is a lot calmer than the opening of chapter one.

I'm so looking forward to learning and growing in our faith with you, sweet sisters, as we make our way through Genesis 1-4.

study questions:

“God created everything. No small feat by any means.”

Q: As we prepare to dig our way through the first few chapters of our Sacred Scripture, let's think on what we recall of the creation and our first parents. Is there a particular part about the creation story that you've always had questions on or had a hard time digesting? Often times, the parts that stick with you from youth are the important parts of the story, but what small details do you recall that maybe offer additional or new insight now, into the overall bigger picture of Scripture & our faith?



Today's Scripture

n/a

If you are at ALL into Pinterest, you've probably seen the meme "You have the same amount of hours in a day as Beyonce.". It implies that you have just as much time as she does, and also serves to encourage one to try to do as much as they can to work towards achieving their goals. Before we jump into what was created when and all of that good stuff, I wanted to touch on the symbolism and how we understand the verbiage used by the author of Genesis.

While you, Beyonce, and I might have the same number of hours in a day, there's a pretty good chance that God had WAY more hours in His "days" during creation. On the other hand, it's entirely possible that He didn't even NEED six days as we know them.

In 1950, the Vatican Encyclical titled "Humani Generis," by Pope Pius XII, was published. In section 38, we read that a letter written to the Archbishop of Paris by the Pontifical Commission on Biblical Studies outlines that when we're studying scripture, we need to keep in mind that it was written "in simple and metaphorical language adapted to the mentality of a people but little cultured." The writers of the bible were writing as a human to other humans in ways that humans could understand.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops says that Genesis uses a, "literary structure of six days," rather than specifying that there were six actual days as we know them now, with 24 hours in each day. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that, "In order to reveal himself to men, in the condescension of his goodness God speaks to them in human words," (CCC Section 1, Chapter 2, Article 3).

“The writers of the bible were writing as a human to other humans, in ways that humans could understand.”

Now, I'll be completely honest: I have a REALLY hard time not taking things literally. Things are usually either black or white, and I have a hard time finding the gray area. Sometimes it's a flaw, sometimes it helps me remain impartial. However, when it comes to reading Holy Scripture, this way of thinking and processing things certainly makes things harder. I have to remind myself to just have faith, and to try to take away the overall message or meaning.

So, tomorrow, when we get into the “what was created on which day,” part of things, let us try keep in mind that while we only have 24 hours in one day, God can do all things in any manner He wishes. The scriptures are written to be understood by humans, so let us pray for understanding and discernment.


study questions:

Q: What part of scripture tends to be the most difficult for you to accept or understand? For me, clearly it's not taking things too literally. Let's pray for some extra understanding and wisdom while we dig into such an important part of our Scripture. Is there any other area of Scripture study that is difficult for you to understand?



Genesis

Day 3 // In the Beginning

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Today's Scripture

Genesis 1: 1-13

As I mentioned in yesterday's post, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops says that Genesis uses a, "literary structure of six days," rather than specifying that there were six actual days as we know them now, with 24 hours in each day. The USCCB also goes on to tell us the creation events in the first three days, directly correlate to the creation events in the second three days.

On day one of creation, "The Earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep," (1:2). Then God said let there be light, and there was light! As simple as that! God separated the light from the darkness, He called the light day and the dark He called night. We don't know where the light is coming from, or the darkness, or what the light and darkness is covering, just that they exist because He made them exist.

On day two, God created an "expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters," (1:6). Uhm, what? I had to read and re-read that one a couple of times, then consult the USCCB take on this passage. They tell us that, "the water is divided into water above and water below the earth so that the earth appears and is no longer 'without outline'". Saltwater seas and fresh water under the earth are separated from water in the heavens, as well as an expanse which

**"It can be so
easy to do
things half-
way"**

God called, "Heaven,". I always wondered why it's generally thought when you're little that Heaven is up in the clouds, and this appears to be where we get it.

On day three, we get the land and the seas. He called the dry land earth, and the waters He called seas. They're separated and put in their own places. Separating the opposites seems to be a trend here. Light from dark, waters on the earth from waters in the heavens/atmosphere, dry land from the seas.

On the dry land, God put vegetation. "Plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them, after their kind," (1:11). This is the first time we read that God reflected back on what He had created, and, "saw that it was good,". Well, of COURSE it was good! God created it!

How often is it that we can truly look back on something we have created and known it was good? It can be SO easy to just do things halfway, just to get them done. Doing things halfway or providing less than our best effort doesn't do anyone any good. Whether it is with school, spending time with family, or finishing a project at work, we do nobody justice by putting forth our best effort.

I wear a consecration bracelet on my left wrist. Every time I look at it, I'm reminded of the love our dear sweet Mother Mary has for us, and the struggles and efforts she went through to bring us Christ and be our Spiritual Mother. It's a physical reminder to work on my patience (something I tend to struggle with) and to give whatever I'm working on my very best effort, no matter how hard or boring or unpleasant the task at hand may be. It's such a helpful thing to me, to have a physical reminder no matter where I am (at the office, at the gym, or anywhere else) to give my best as Mary and our Lord have given.

study questions:

Q: How can you remind yourself to give your very best at everything you do for Our Lord? What physical or spiritual prompts can you use as a reminder to keep prayerful, and to offer your very best efforts in everything that you do? I find apps and calendars to be a wonderful help, not only in accomplishing what I need to for school or work, but also for learning more about our wonderful faith.



Image by Cailin Valente

Today's Scripture

Genesis 1: 14-31

On day one God created light, and separated it from darkness. We don't know where the light was coming from, but now we get to day four and we read that He created the stars, "for signs and for seasons, for days and for years," (1:14). This part made me stop in my tracks.

For signs and for seasons, for days and for years. For SIGNS! Like the sign in the sky the shepherds and magi followed to get to Bethlehem when Christ was born. Goosebumps. God is the ultimate Type-A planner, knowing exactly what He needed to put together for us. Think of how many shepherds, sailors, and countless other humans use(d) the stars as guides through the night! He did that FOR US! How cool is that!? It's hard to ignore His love when we see SUCH clear examples of His brilliant omniscience. He saw it was good, and that was the end of day four.

On day five, which corresponds to day two, we get the fish of the sea (created on day 2) and the birds of the air (also day two). God saw it was good, and told them to be fruitful and multiply. Pretty straightforward, and I think this settles the "What came first, the chicken or the egg," question.

On day six, corresponding to day three, we get cattle and creeping things (though, personally, I could do with less creeping things—spiders and snakes, yuck!) and beasts of the earth. He also created man in His own image. Male and female, He created them, and giving them a twofold command: told them to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it. This is where God gives man dominion over the Earth, telling

us that we are above the birds of the sky and also the creepy crawlies on the Earth. Again, God looks at His work, and sees that it is good.

We keep getting little snippets of "and He saw it was good," and the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "Scripture and Tradition never cease to teach and celebrate this fundamental truth: 'The world was made for the glory of God,...'" (CCC293). God is creating the world, and pouring out His glory into it. He is looking back at His creation, taking a second to admire it, and to convey that in the beautiful world He created for us, we get a glimpse of His glory and his love for us.

Let's take a moment to reflect and ponder on what we can do better next year, so at the end of the next year we can look back and see that it was good.

As we close out this year, let us thank God for His wonderful works, and pray for a happy and healthy new year. Talk to you next year, sweet sisters!!

study questions:

Q: How can you try, as we inch closer to the end of this year & the beginning of the next, to promise yourself & the Lord to work on your best effort? Let's start to look back on the year: where did you falter? Where did you let yourself put forth less than "good" work?

“It’s hard to ignore His love when we see such clear examples of His brilliant omniscience.”



Today's Scripture

Genesis 2: 1-14

Happy New Year, sweet sisters! I hope this finds you well and eager to get this year going on a good foot! What better way to start the year, than by diving back into the story of our creation?! Here we go!

After six days, God looks back on His creation, and sees that it's awesome (my word, not His). He then spends the seventh day resting. Now, I can't even begin to guess why God would NEED to rest, but clearly He had His reasons. Perhaps it was to give an example to His people and set the basis of why we have a day of rest. The USCCB speculates that this is laying the foundation for the Israelites' custom of keeping the Sabbath.

God then works on some necessities for the Earth's plants: He sends a mist to rise up from the ground to water the plants, as there was not yet a rain or man to cultivate the plants. The logistical planner in me loves reading that part.

He created man out of dust (which calls to mind Ash Wednesday—"Remember man, that you are dust," comes from this very passage), and breathed life into his nostrils. For me, the idea of God breathing life into Adam's nostrils calls to mind imagery of the Holy Spirit. It is like God is not only giving Adam LITERAL life, but spiritual life, as well. We don't hear any-

God not only gave Adam physical life, but spiritual life as well.

thing of Him breathing life into the animals, He just created them and told them to be fruitful and multiply and that's what happened.

Now God creates Eden. Out of the ground in Eden, God, "caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil," (2:8-9). Dun dun duuuunnnnn. Foreshadowing! Not only did God create us in a special way, He created a special place in which he put man! He put trees that we'd need to eat from, and ones that He just thought we'd like to look at! Feeding our bodies and providing great ambiance. That seems like a pretty sweet deal, to me.

Next we're given some geography to wrap up today's discussion. "A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers," (2:10). Pishon, which flows around a land full of gold, Gihon, which flows around Cush, Tigris which flows east of Assyria, and the Euphrates.

The places named in this section, according to the USCCB, is mostly derived from ancient Mesopotamian geography. They go on to explain, "Eden may be the name of a region in southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), the term derived from the Sumerian word eden, "fertile plain."..." (USCCB).

With all of the tumultuous happenings and turmoil in the region that could have once been the Garden of Eden mentioned in this very creation story, let us keep our brothers and sisters in Christ currently living in the Middle East in our prayers. Let us pray that this is the year our world leaders achieve some sort of stability and peace in that region. It can be hard to understand the history of violence and hardships faced by many people in the Middle East, but the Lord taught us to love one another, as He loves us.

study questions:

Q: There's something special about God forming man & giving man His own breath. Does this remind you of any other time in our lives? What about Confirmation? God could have created man out of anything, or nothing at all. Do you believe that since God knew man would fall and be buried in the ground upon his death, He chose to make man out of the dust - knowing that we would return to the dust?



Genesis

Day 6 // Male and Female
He Created Them

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Today's Scripture

Genesis 2: 15-24
Deuteronomy 33: 7
Psalm 46: 2

So we have the Earth, the animals, light, stars, night, fish, oceans, land, pretty much everything we could need. Next God plucks man up, and put him into the garden of Eden to take care of it. The wording there, "to take care of it," implies that the garden of Eden isn't our gift, it's not something created for man, but (along with man) created by and for the glory of God.

Then God tells us what's what: eat whatever you want, but NOT the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or else you'll die. Sounds pretty dramatic, right? Dramatic sounding enough to stay away from (especially since it's literally the ONLY tree man was told to NOT EAT FROM)?? Oh goodness, nope. Oranges, coconuts, apples, bananas, cherries, pears, pomegranates, even nuts grow on trees, and NONE of those wind up being good enough. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Back to verse 18. God realizes that it's not good for man to be alone. He decides He is going to make a suitable helper for man, and brings every beast of the field and bird of the sky to Adam to name them. He named every single creature, but none was a suitable companion for Adam.

The USCCB makes a point that I think is WELL worth mentioning here. "...[the term] "Helper" need not imply subordination, for God is called a helper (Dt

**Affinity
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33:7; Ps 46:2). The language suggests a profound affinity between the man and the woman and a relationship that is supportive and nurturing," (USCCB). This makes so much more sense than God creating woman to be inherently subordinate.

God puts Adam to sleep, takes one of his ribs, closes him back up, and uses that rib to make woman. He brought woman to Adam, and he instantly recognizes that finally, here is his match. If you think about it, it's pretty much love at first sight. Maybe I have seen too many romantic comedies, but the point still holds.

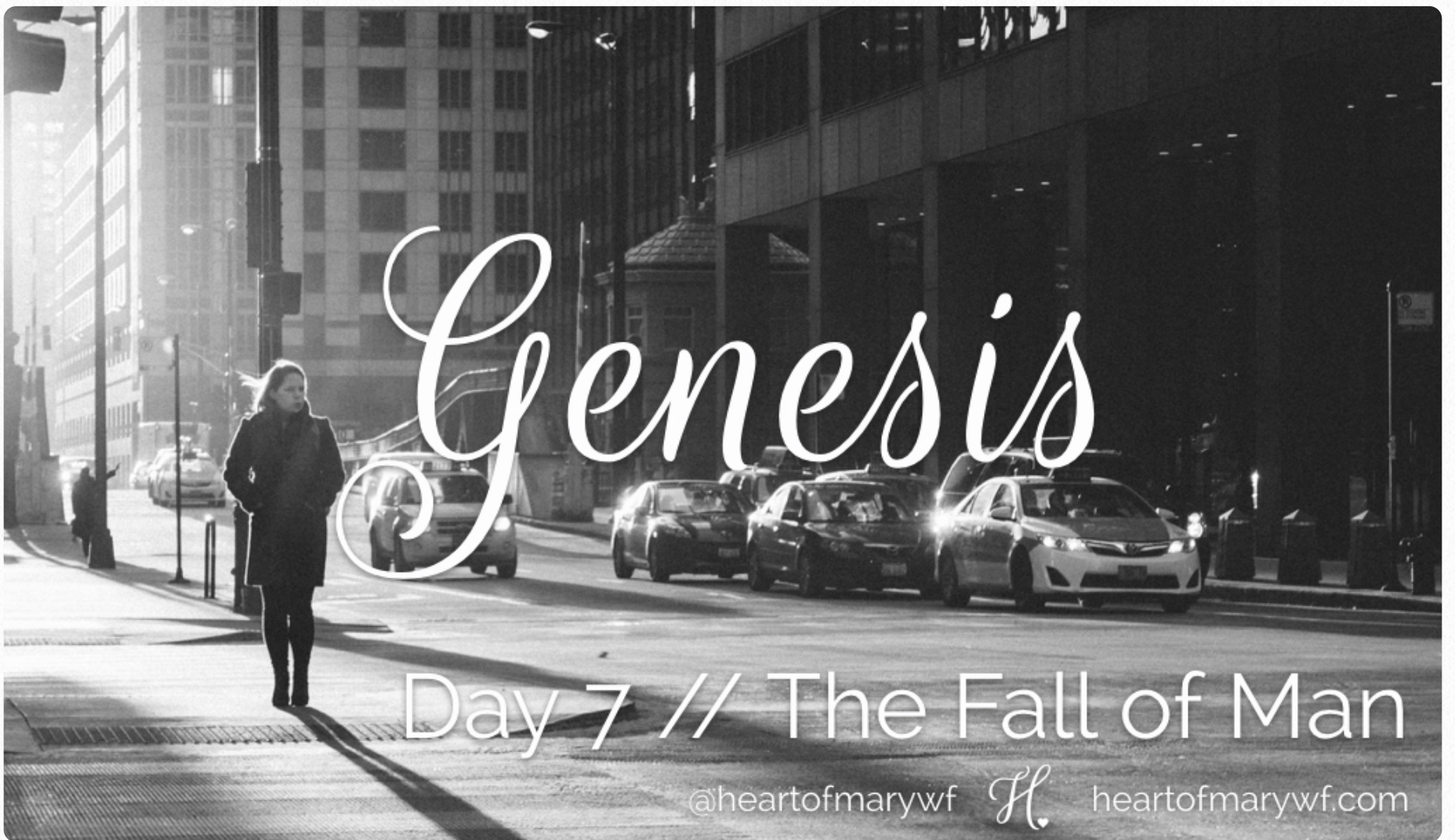
Just think of Adam, naming every single creature, hoping for the next one to be his match, and not a single one winds up being the right creation. Finally, after all of Adam's efforts naming every creature, God made woman for man, and then we get one of my personal favorite passages: "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh," (Gen 2:24).

This is one passage that's in many many maaaaany weddings. Not just Catholic weddings, either. It's a beautiful sentiment. Think about it—from when you get married onward, it's just you and your husband together. He's there to have your back, you're there to have his, and together you face everything from the happiness to the sorrows, and anything in between.

The last tidbit of this chapter says that they were both naked, but felt no shame. This sets the stage for chapter three, much like the ominous command to NOT eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil also foreshadows the fall of man.

study questions:

Q: Let's reflect on the one thing God told Adam to avoid: the tree. We all have "one thing" to avoid that we struggle with. Everyone sins. And often we all have a particular sin with which we struggle on a regular basis. What is the biggest challenge you face in your daily life with respect to following God's laws? What can you do to overcome your biggest obstacles?



Today's Scripture

Genesis 3: 1-2

We start out chapter three right away with a conversation between Eve and a serpent. You and I know that the serpent is the Devil, but that knowledge isn't exactly presented as simply as that in this chapter.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church digs into this to give us some background and extra detail:

"Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called "Satan" or the "devil,". The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: "The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing," (CCC 391).

My literal mind doesn't understand how God could have created something that started out so pure but wound up the antithesis of purity. Clearly, God knew (as he knows all) that Satan and his fallen angels would fall to the sin of pride. Why didn't he just NOT create Satan, then man would never have been lead to sin! This is hard for me to understand and take without my faith working a little overtime. The Catechism addresses this, as well:

"It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but "we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him," (CCC 395).

God created His creatures, the angels as well as the humans, with free will. The Fourth Lateran Council in November of the year 1215 addressed the fall of Satan and takes us into the fall of man. "The devil and

Affinity between the man & the woman gives to a relationship that is supportive & nurturing.

other demons were created by God naturally good, but they became evil by their own doing. Man, however, sinned at the prompting of the devil," (EWTN).

God created man in His image, and established him in His friendship (CCC 396). Man was created so perfectly, he literally walked with God! He had conversations WITH GOD. It's not to say that we cannot converse with God, of course we should do just that as often as we can! However, (again, Literal Mandi coming in here) we don't often hear His voice as physically and literally as Adam and Eve did.

Because of the fall of man, we now have to strive even harder and work constantly at having a relationship with God. It is too easy to fall away, as so many of us do at one point in our lives or another. I experienced my own fall from the Church after moving out for college, and now I have a love and fire for my faith like never before. I wish it wouldn't have taken my own personal fall to develop this fire and love, but that's what it took for me to have a truly authentic and individual love for our Faith.

study questions:

Q: How wonderful it would be to walk with the Lord and see & speak directly to Him! What would you say? Would you ask Him questions? What is in your heart? If you're hurting, ask Him for healing. If you're lost or confused, ask for understanding. Remember sisters: though we may not walk with Him the way Adam & Eve did in the beginning, He is ALWAYS walking with us.



Today's Scripture

Genesis 3: 1-7

Let's get back to the conversation that the serpent and Eve have. Genesis 3:1 says that the serpent was more "crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made," and Satan uses this craftiness and cunning to convince Eve to sin. The serpent asks Eve if she really can't eat from any of the trees. She says that she can eat from any except the tree in the middle of the garden because God said she'd die. The serpent says to her that she'll surely not die. "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil," (Gen 3:5). He's basically taunting her. "Ohh, come on, you're not REALLY going to die, God just doesn't want you to be as smart as He is, or to be His equal!" is basically what he tells Eve.

"We must remain steadfast in our faith & knowledge of right and wrong according to our faith... [and] not what others are telling us."

This seems to give Eve the push she needed to eat of the tree, despite knowing she shouldn't. Genesis 3:6 says, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; she gave also to her husband and he ate."

In that very first sin, Adam and Eve decided their desires were more important than God's commands. They abused their freedom, and disobeyed the one command given to them by God. All subsequent sin, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "would be disobedience toward god and lack of trust in His goodness," (CCC397).

After they ate the fruit, Scripture says their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. They fashioned themselves loin coverings. They were embarrassed.

Think of the logic the Devil used to convince Eve: you're not really going to die, God just doesn't want you to be as smart as He is. How often do we read, see, or hear supposed logic telling us that a given sin is okay?

The political arena is rife with these "logical" arguments. Roe V. Wade comes to mind as the most obvious. The right to choice is more important to this country at this time than the right of the innocent to live. Pretty much every major political point made in any presidential debate these days is one person justifying their point with supposed logic and "facts," to prove their own agenda.

We must remain steadfast in our faith and our knowledge of what is right and what is wrong according to OUR faith, OUR church, not what others are telling us. Have you ever caught yourself thinking "Well, yeah, I guess that makes sense," when you hear someone justifying something you know in your heart isn't right? I know I've struggled with that in the past.

study questions:

Q: What can you do in those situations? Pray! Read Scripture! Come up with your own way to make sure you stay steadfast; try not to be lead astray. What candidates best have their agenda aligned with our faith? It's so easy to get distracted, especially with the political climate just getting warmed up. As the presidential election gets closer & closer, I'm sure we'll hear more & more gay marriage, abortion, and every other side of the moral issues that can be politicized. pray for our country, and for our politicians elected (or soon to be elected) to do what is right; not just what is best for their own agenda.



Genesis

Day 9 // Naked and Unashamed

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Today's Scripture

Genesis 3: 8-12

When my sister and I were younger, if we were getting into something we shouldn't (it was usually the cookies on the tiptop shelf of the pantry, or looking for hidden Christmas or birthday presents), and we heard either of our parents coming, we'd get this pit in our stomach and try really hard to make it look like we were doing the OPPOSITE of whatever we really were doing. I still sometimes get that pit in my stomach if I know I'm not doing something I should be or doing something I shouldn't be. I think this is the exact reaction Adam and Eve had when they heard God walking in the garden. Eek! He's coming! Quick—hide!

"...the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden," (Gen 3:8).

Yep. They knew what they'd done was wrong, and they also now knew they were naked, which they equated with shamefulness and embarrassment. God calls out to Adam and Eve, and in my mind's eye, I imagine Adam skulking out to meet God with his tail between his legs.

God and Adam talk. God asks Adam why he was hiding, to which Adam replies that he's naked and so he hid himself. God asks Adam who told him he was naked, and if he ate from the tree He commanded him not to eat.

"The man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree and I ate,'" (Gen 3:12). It kind of sounds here like Adam is simultaneously blaming either God for giving him Adam, or Eve, for giv-

ing him the fruit from the tree. It sounds eerily similar to the response my sister or I would have given when we were little, had we gotten caught doing something we shouldn't have been.

There's something almost childlike about Adam's response, and I don't mean that in a derogatory way. If you think about it, children are the most innocent of all of us. Adam had just lost his innocence, and was trying to get away with it. He knew what he'd done was wrong, of course, or he wouldn't have hidden himself from the Lord.

Luckily, today, we have something Adam didn't. The Sacrament of Reconciliation, created so we may reconcile ourselves with the Lord. Compared to the other sacraments, this one is a little harder, I think. It's not easy to go to a priest in the confessional and admit all of our wrong-doings. When was the last time you received the sacrament of Reconciliation? The beginning of a new year sounds like a great time to make a good confession. What better way to start the year off than with a clean soul?

Let us not hide ourselves from the Lord, who loves us dearly, just because we've sinned. Take some time to reflect before going into the confessional, and take some time to work on your relationship with the Lord. Think of how wonderful the burden lifted from your shoulders will feel when you receive absolution. Go, sweet sisters, and work on your relationship with the Lord! Ask Him for forgiveness, and He shall give it!



“Ask Him for forgiveness & He shall give it!”

study questions:

Q: Think back to the last few times to went to reconciliation. Is there something you recall yourself confessing repeatedly? What sins do you have the most trouble overcoming? Perhaps you can speak with your priest in confession for advice on overcoming these habits. Think of some ways you can help yourself turn away from your habitual sins, and ask for help! Have you ever thought of doing an examination of conscious in an hour of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament? Spending a little extra time ahead of reconciliation without rushing through the examination can help you gain a little extra perspective.



Today's Scripture

Genesis 3: 13-24

Dun dun duuuunnnnn! We're starting today out with quite the dramatic overture. After Adam tells God that it was because of Eve that he ate of the forbidden fruit, God turns to Eve, and sis her what she's done. She explains that the serpent tricked her, and she ate.

God turns to the serpent, and tells him that because of this transgression, he is now the most cursed creature on the earth. The serpent will now crawl on his belly, and that there will forever be enmity between woman and the serpent, and between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. The woman's seed will bruise the serpent's seed on the head, while the serpent's seed will only be able to strike at the foot of the woman's children.

Now he turns to Eve: "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain, you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you," (Gen 3:16).

At this point Adam probably thinks he's getting away home free, but God turns to Adam, too: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat it, all the days of your life...till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; For you are dust, and to dust you shall return," (Gen 17-19). This is the second part of scripture from which we get the words at Ash Wednesday when the priest is crossing our foreheads. It's a physical and spiritual reminder of where we came from, and because of sin, where our bodies will end up.

"Our sins have consequences"

Because of sin, man's body now dies at the end of his life. Man is no longer immortal or worthy of walking with God.

Everyone involved in the Original Sin, gets dealt a major consequence because of his or her involvement. This is still the same with you and I. Our sins have consequences: literal and earthly consequences, as well as spiritual consequences upon our death.

Adam now has to WORK to get the Earth to provide the nourishment for himself and his family. Eve will struggle with childbirth, and the serpent is now the most cursed creature on the earth. Adam and Eve then get kicked out of paradise, and the Lord stationed the cherubim to guard the way to the tree of life.

This is a pretty emotionally touching and a sad end to the chapter. Man has now lost paradise. The Catechism of the Catholic Church specifically points out that, "...the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will "return to the ground," for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history," (CCC 400).

study questions:

Q: Let's reflect on the real consequences our sin has. What can we do to take full advantage of the graces the Lord offers us? What can we do with our time on Earth, to keep our souls (or restore our souls) to the best, most glorious souls they can be? We may still need the purifying fires of Purgatory to enter back into paradise with God. When man fell, he fall HARD. But when man fell, God gave us the ability to overcome original sin through the sacraments. We have the sacraments to give ourselves a better shot at rejoining the Lord upon our death. Let us be thankful for the graces & love the Lord still has for us.



Today's Scripture

Genesis 4

Adam and Eve have relations, and Eve conceived and gave birth to Cain. She recognized that this was done, "with the help of the Lord," (Gen 4:1). Again, she gave birth to a son, Abel. Abel was a keeper of the flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Cain and Abel both bring offerings to the Lord. Cain's offering was from fruit of the ground, and Abel's offering was the firstlings of his flock, and their fat portions. The Lord looked on Abel with favor, and kind of ignored Cain's offering.

The second sin in Genesis is that of jealousy and pride. Cain is angry and dejected because the Lord didn't praise him or favor him over Abel's offering. Unfortunately, I'm sure many of us can relate. How often do we work hard at home or at the office, then see someone else get more credit or praise for their efforts?

Cain gets SO jealous, he gets his brother into going out into a field (presumably to avoid detection) and then murders him. God asks Cain what happened to Abel, and Cain acts like he doesn't know. God then says "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!" because of COURSE, God knows everything. God punishes Cain because he spilled his brothers blood upon the ground, and now Cain can no longer get the Earth to produce for him. God curses Cain to wander the earth, and put a mark on him so that nobody would kill him. Cain then left the Lord's presence, and settled east of Eden.

The timeline seems to jump forward a bit. Now Cain has settled and has a wife. Cain then has intercourse with his wife, and they then conceive and have Enoch. Cain founded a city, which he named after his son. Enoch becomes the father of Irad, and becomes the father of Mehujael, who becomes the father of Methu-



Genesis

Day 12 // His Mercy is Unending

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Today's Scripture

Genesis 4

Happy Saturday, dear sisters! Today we wrap up our study on Genesis. We've covered a LOT over the last almost two weeks.

“God is always there to give us grace and help lift us back up.”

As I mentioned in yesterday's study, the themes of sin and God's grace are ALL OVER Genesis. Right from the start, God tells man what he needs to NOT do to remain in grace. When man falters and does exactly what man isn't supposed to do, God punishes them, but then later blesses Adam and Eve with not one son, but two (and later a third).

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, we learn that, “All men are implicated in Adam's sin, as St Paul affirms: ‘By one man's disobedience many (that is, all men) were made sinners’: ‘sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all

men sinned.’²⁸⁹ The Apostle contrasts the universality of sin and death with the universality of salvation in Christ,” (CCC 402).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts a great perspective on the importance of the beginning of Genesis: “Among all the Scriptural texts about creation, the first three chapters of Genesis occupy a unique place. From a literary standpoint these texts may have had diverse sources. The inspired authors have placed them at the beginning of Scripture to express in their solemn language the truths of creation - its origin and its end in God, its order and goodness, the vocation of man, and finally the drama of sin and the hope of salvation. Read in the light of Christ, within the unity of Sacred Scripture and in the living Tradition

of the Church, these texts remain the principal source for catechesis on the mysteries of the "beginning": creation, fall, and promise of salvation," (CCC289).

Let us not forget, dear sisters, that with all of our sins and shortcomings, God is always there to give us grace and help lift us back up. No matter what we struggle with, we have the sacraments to turn to and get back into the Lord's graces. The punishment of sin is death, but the gift of God's graces is life!

What part of Genesis spoke most to you? To me, there is something so beautiful about the patience and grace God has for us. No matter how often we sin, we can always turn to him for forgiveness and grace. This isn't to say we should take advantage of His graces and patience, that we should intentionally sin just to go to confession and receive graces.

Let us turn to him with honest and open hearts, dear sisters, and let us never take for granted the unending font of grace the Lord provides.

study questions:

Q: What part of this study and these chapters spoke to your soul the most? I would highly encourage going through your own bible and highlighting passages that mean the most to you. Even if you don't have a study bible, what can you do to make your bible more your bible? The more you feel connected with Scripture, the more you'll enjoy and encourage yourself to dig deeper. The deeper we dig, the more we come to know and love our Lord & our faith.
