



CARDINAL NEWMAN
CATHOLIC SCHOOL



R.E. Department

Eduqas Route B—Component 1.1

Origins and Meaning Revision



Omnipotence—The belief that God is all powerful

Creation ex nihilo—Creation out of nothing. Before God created the universe, nothing existed. Only God can create out of nothing.

Imago Dei—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.

Inspiration- "God breathed" The belief that spirit of God guides and individual to act or write what is good and true .

Revelation—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.

Stewardship-The duty to care for creation responsibly , as stewards rather than consumers, and to protect it for future generations.

Transcendence—Existing outside of space and time; God exists in a way that makes him nothing like anything else that exists, above and beyond creation.

Catholic Beliefs about the Origin of the Universe and the Concept of “Creatio ex nihil”

G.K Chesterton said if we look at the world , we notice that *“it seems to proceed by certain rules, in the growth of flowers a green architecture that builds itself without visible hand. There seems to be a design, a purpose, an intention to produce the flowers, plants, trees and other things in the world”*

Catholic refer to the author of the story of the world as “God”. God is the origin of the world, the “first cause” or Creator. Christians, Jews and Muslims all call to God the Creator, the One who gives the world its meaning.

Creation out of Nothing—St Augustine

There are several things that Augustine introduces about the origin of the universe

Eternal—“*You were, and besides you nothing was*”: In the beginning, before the creation of the universe, before time and space exists, only God exists.

Transcendent—God is beyond space and time. God is not part of the universe but he is not

God is....

Creator—God created “heaven and earth”. Every Sunday in the Nicene Creed Christians profess their faith in God “*maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible*”

Omnipotent—God was able to create something out of nothing because God is omnipotent.

Genesis Creation Accounts—Catholic and Fundamentalist

Catholic beliefs

The authors of the biblical books are **Inspired by God**

The books of the Bible contain **God's revelation**

The books of the Bible are the **Word of God**

Must take into account the context in which the Bible was written.

Genesis is seen as a symbolic parable about humans relationship with God and creation.

Catholic do not see Genesis as an alternative to the Big Bang and evolution but instead believe that science answers the how questions and religion why.

Catholics interpret the period of 6 days as 6 periods of time rather than taking it literally.

Fundamentalist beliefs

The authors of the biblical books are **Inspired by God**

The books of the Bible contain **God's revelation**

The books of the Bible are the **Word of God**

They believe that the Bible accounts should be taken literally.

Creationists are Fundamentalist Christians and they have a literal understanding of how the universe was created as described in Genesis.

Similarities of the different attitudes are highlighted in bold.

Genesis and the Big Bang

Big Bang

This idea of a unique and explosive beginning to the cosmos out of 'a singular moment' – a singular dense point containing all of the universe's matter and energy, which is then thrown outwards – is called the Big Bang theory. What a lot of people do not realise is that this theory was first put forward not by Stephen Hawking, but by a Catholic priest, Father Georges Lemaître.

Why was a Catholic priest able to come up with this theory? Catholics have a less literalist approach to reading the Bible than do some other Christian groups.

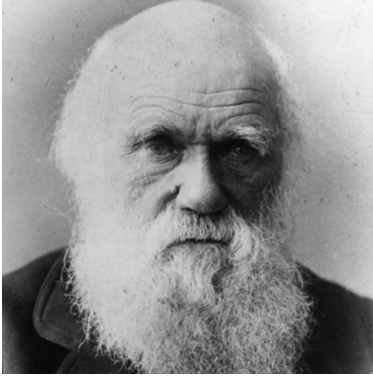
The author of Genesis is saying why things are the way they are, not how things are the way they are. Theology answers the question 'why?' Science answers the question 'how?' The author of Genesis is trying to say that this wonderful, intelligible universe, which God invites us to explore scientifically with our God-given intelligence, had a beginning – the creative act of a loving and intelligent God who created everything out of nothing. If God chose to do that through the Big Bang, all well and good!

Stephen Hawking

One thing on which Hawking and the Catholic Church would disagree with regard to the Big Bang theory concerns whether or not the theory needs to have a Creator. Hawking's believes that the universe does not need a creator. Hawking says: *'Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing.'*

A Christian would respond by questioning what caused the Big Bang to happen? . 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' is the question which ultimately led the leading atheist Anthony Flew to a belief in God.

Genesis, Charles Darwin and Richard Dawkins

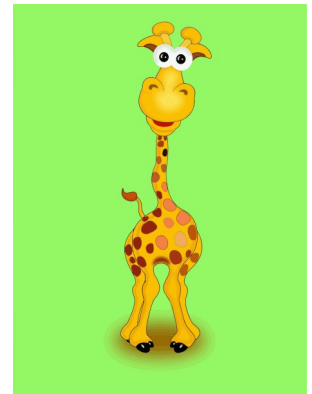


While visiting the Galapagos Islands, Charles Darwin (1809–82) noticed that there were variations in some of the characteristics found in animals of the same species on the different islands. He put this down to the variations in conditions on the different islands, saying that the animals had adapted to their different conditions. His theory of evolution attempted to explain how these variations come about – through the process of natural selection. An example of this would be that giraffes developed longer necks to help them reach higher food sources in the trees. Those who did not develop this longer neck died out.

How would a Catholic respond to this theory?

The Catholic belief is that evolution can compliment the theory of evolution. If God wanted to create human beings, who says the process he uses can not take 14 billion years and involve a Big Bang and evolution.

Several Popes beginning with Pope Pius XII in 1950 have taught that there is no conflict between Darwin's theory and the Catholic understanding of God's deliberate, purposeful creation of human beings.



St John Paul II wrote "there is no conflict between evolution and the doctrine of the faith regarding man and his vocation"

He goes on to say that since further discoveries in the natural sciences and other fields of study tend to suggest that evolution is a theory of great merit which advances our understanding.

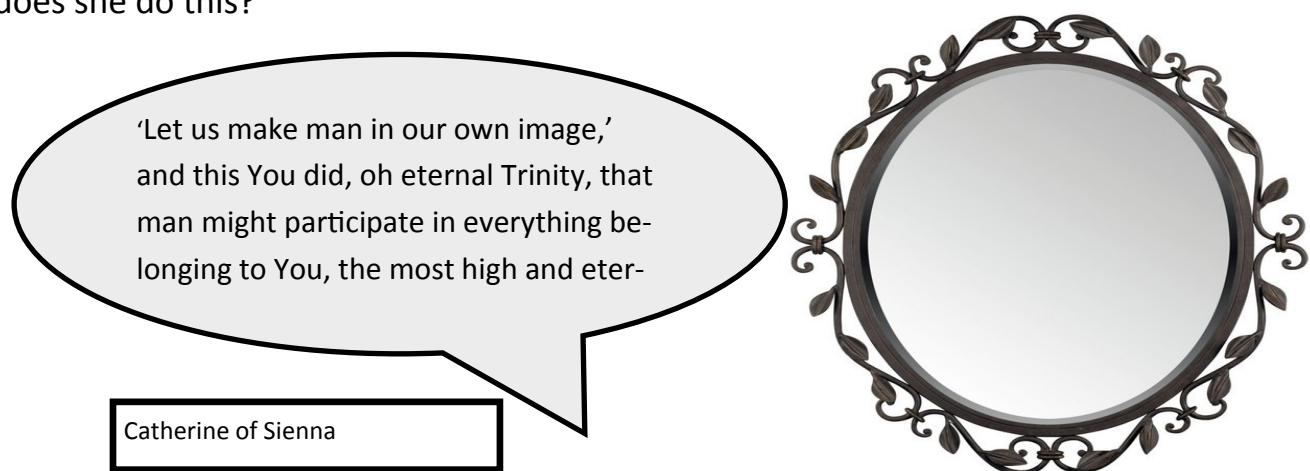
Questions a Catholic might ask Darwin....

- How did the universe first come into existence?
- How the purpose carrying genetic codes which gave rise for survival in living species come from mere matter?

Saint Catherine of Siena on Imago Dei

Saint Catherine of Siena (1347–80) was a woman of deep spirituality, passionate in her desire to make people aware of their openness to God. She wrote a famous work about this called *The Dialogue of Divine Providence*, which is a conversation between God and a soul trying to make her way to God.

In her meditation on imago Dei Catherine uses the image of a reflection in a mirror. Why does she do this?



Origin: So that we can reflect on the idea that we are not random organisms – our origin is in God, our life belongs to God alone.

Conscience: Because we have God's love and truth in our lives, we also have an inner conscience that tells us when we have done wrong, when we come up short of our best selves.

Light to Love by: Catherine says that the goodness of God shows us 'the stains on [our] face', like a mirror, or in the same way that the sun on the windscreen of a car shows up the dirt and the smudges!

Dignity and the Sanctity of Life: This dignifies everyone. Despite being criticised for the bad company she kept, Catherine spent much of her life hanging around with the outcasts and sinners (as did Jesus). She knew that because God loved us enough to create us and make us in his image, we can be confident that he will pick us up to try again. ⁹

Destiny and the Sanctity of Life: More than just respect in this life, imago Dei means that the true destiny of each human is to live in the eternal love of the Trinity. Life is thus sacred both in its origin and in its destiny.

Catholic and Other Christian Views on the Value of Human Life and on Abortion

Catholic beliefs about the sanctity of human life

The Catholic Church teaches that everyone has the right to life and that *'Human life is sacred because from the beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end'* (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] 2258). Catholic views about the dignity of human life are rooted in their fundamental belief in the sanctity of human life



"Human life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognised as having the rights of a person" CCC2270

The UK Law on Abortion

- Must be before 24 weeks and two doctors must agree.
- Conditions are that there must be some risk to the mothers mental or physical health or to other children if the pregnancy continued.
- If there is a risk that the baby will be born severely disabled or if there is a risk of physical harm to the mother then there is no time limit on the abortion.

Attitudes towards abortion

The Catholic Church believes that God gives us the gift of life at the moment of conception "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you"

From conception onwards the Catholic Church believes that no one has the right to interfere with anyone's life and that we have a duty to preserve life.

The Church will always think that adoption is a better solution to abortion in the case of an unwanted child.

In some situations the Church will support the doctrine of double effect.

Other Christian Views

The Church of England/Anglicans share the Catholic view on the sanctity of human life. As a sister Christian community with a common creed, their understanding of the value of human life is almost identical to the Catholic approach, and the two Churches have worked together on many projects on behalf of the poor at home and abroad.

The Church of England recognises that there will be different views on the issue of abortion, but summarises its own position to be as follows: *'The Church of England combines strong opposition to abortion with a recognition that there can be – strictly limited – conditions under which it may be morally preferable to any available alternative.'* It considers the number of abortions in the UK to be unacceptably high.

Humanism



Peter Singer

A humanist who would be critical of the Catholic view of the value of human life would be the Australian philosopher Peter Singer (b. 1946).

Singer believes that we should help as many people as possible to enjoy life and eliminate the suffering of as many people as possible – that is, we should increase the pleasure and decrease the suffering of 'humanity'. This is a form of utilitarianism.

Singer rejects the notion of 'sanctity of life', preferring instead the idea of 'quality of life'. Quality of life is more important when we are deciding what is right and wrong. He says that quality of life for all animal species (including humans) is related to the amount of suffering/enjoyment (or pleasure) they have – those who suffer more have a worse quality of life, and those who enjoy more have a better quality of life.

Although there is no 'official **humanist**' position on abortion, humanists tend towards the pro-choice position. They think that abortion is morally acceptable as a personal choice.

Humanists support the legalisation of abortion so that unsafe, or 'back-street', abortions, do not take place.

Humanists do not consider life 'sacred' but they have respect for human life. They think that, rather than 'sanctity of life', the 'quality of life' of mother, unborn, or both is much more useful in helping us decide what to do, especially if there is a conflict of interests.

Humanists do not think a foetus becomes a person with feelings and rights until 'well after conception'.

While acknowledging that it is a complex situation with lots of factors, humanists think that preference should be given to a more mature human being who already exists in the world. Effectively this supports the woman's right to choose.

Where Did the Bible Come From?



Writing—Beginning around 1000BC scribes in Israel began to write down parts of the oral tradition about important people and events.

The Bible is a collection of different books. There are 46 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.

Speaking— Oral Tradition—
unlike now no one could write.
As God was revealed to the Chosen people of Israel oral accounts were passed on by those who experienced the events first hand and then by successive

Old Testament

Law: writings which offer instructions on how to live – e.g. the Ten Commandments. The first five books (the Pentateuch) of the Bible are full of this sort of writing, and so collectively they are called The Law (Torah in Hebrew).

Stories of Origins: in some parts we also find creation meditations, like Genesis 1, and symbolic narratives, such as Genesis 2–3. For example, a flashy word for the Adam and Eve story is aetiology – a kind of parable which explains in a symbolic way ‘why things are as they are’.

History: those books of the Old Testament which narrate the story of God’s people from the time they entered the Promised Land (1200 BC). They encourage Israel to imitate the great heroes of their past by doing what God asks – keeping the ‘deal’, the covenant.

Prophecy: prophecy means ‘to speak on behalf of’. The prophets spoke for God to his people in the present moment, challenging them and their leaders to keep the deal with God. The prophets spoke of Israel as being the future light for all the nations, and of having a Messiah who would attract all peoples to God.

Wisdom: through good times and bad, these writings are prayers, sayings, songs, love poetry, philosophical reflections on life, and advice on how to live.

New Testament

Gospels: proclamations of the 'good news' (= 'gospel') about the love of God made visible in Jesus, who is God among us.

Historical (Acts of the Apostles): an account of the spread of the Gospel in the Early Church, particularly through the experiences of Peter and Paul.

Letters: actual letters sent by early Christian leaders such as Peter, Paul and John to Christian communities, encouraging them, guiding them and addressing specific issues in the Early Church.

Apocalyptic: a richly symbolic way of writing designed to encourage and strengthen the Early Church through the message that God is in charge of history and will remain faithful.

How Catholics Interpret the Scripture

Catholics believe that the Bible emerged from certain events, which were interpreted and passed on in oral traditions, before eventually being written down by human authors in different literary forms.

Catholics believe that the Bible contains God's revelation. Revelation means "uncovering" or "showing". In the Bible God communicates himself and his will to human beings.

"In order to discover the sacred authors intention, the reader must take into account the condition of their time and culture, literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating" (CCC110)

We must read the Bible in the context of when it was written including the literary forms.

Catholics believe that the authors of the Bible were inspired however they do not believe that everything that is written in the Bible is 100% true.

Fundamentalist Christians believe that in order to understand the Bible all we need to do is read it. They take every word in the Bible as literally true. They have a literalist approach.

Fundamentalist Christians do not take into account the different literary forms in the Bible.

What does Genesis teach us about God and Human Beings?

God is eternal. Genesis 1:1: *'In the beginning God...'* – only God has no beginning.

God is omnibenevolent (all-loving). God is infinitely loving and infinitely generous. He is the Supreme Being who needs nothing and so cannot be self-interested, and yet he created the universe with us in it. So Creation is the result of God's love. Creation comes into existence out of God's infinite love. It is 'God-loved' into being.

1In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God's spirit hovered over the water. 3God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. (Genesis 1:1–3)

God as transcendent = God is beyond our reality, beyond time and space.



GOD

Creation happens at God's word. 1:3 'God said, *"Let there be light"*, and *there was light*' – God speaks creation into existence. For Christians, the universe is not a random accident, a cosmic coincidence that just happens to be here, nor has it always been here.

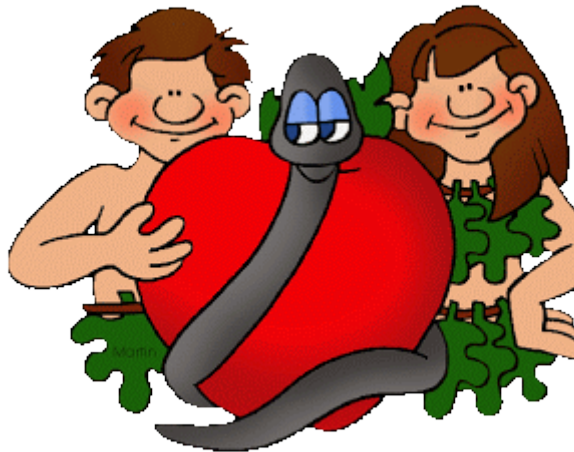
Although the second Creation account tells us of God's omnipotence and other qualities, it is less cosmic and more anthropocentric (focused on human beings), underlining God's closeness to us and his desire to be in relationship with us. It is a story about human beings and their place in creation and in relationship to the Creator God.

If the creation accounts are taken together, the author is (or authors are) trying to communicate the revelation from God that all of creation, all that exists, is not simply 'there' – it is contingent and has been brought into being by the infinite love and generosity of a necessary, omnipotent, transcendent, immanent, omnibenevolent God.

Imago Dei. Genesis 1:27 says: *'God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.'* Human beings, male and female, are made last in creation, and are made in the imago Dei, in the image of God – they reflect something of God in creation

What does Genesis teach us about humans?

Human dignity and sanctity of life. This gives humans a special status and sanctity in creation. We reflect something of God in our intelligence, our free will and our ability to relate and love.



Goodness of Creation. Again and again, at the end of each of the six days of Creation, God declares what was created that day to be 'good'. All that is brought into being by the omnibenevolent, generous and living

Human stewardship. In Genesis 1:26–29 God gives human beings a special mastery/dominion over the other species, as well as over the plants for food. Catholics believe that being made in the image of God, humans are also stewards of creation, exercising a special responsibility for its care. As Pope Francis pointed out in his 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, human beings must regard all creatures as part of one created family, since they share one and the same Father in God the Creator

Genesis 2

The imago Dei. God creates Man, Adam, from the soil (Genesis 2:7). Human and humility both come from the same Latin word, humus, meaning 'soil' or 'earth'. Adam is materially made of the earth but at the same time has the divine breath of God, the spark of life, a soul.

Male and female. In this second creation story God takes his time bringing together Male and Female. Far from being an afterthought, the creation of Eve demonstrates our need for one another and is the highlight of the account, drawing a love song/rap out of Adam (Genesis 2:23)

Goodness of creation. Man is placed in Eden (Genesis 2:8–9), an idyllic place full of goodness, to live life and enjoy the goodness of God’s gifts in creation.

Human stewardship. Human beings are granted the gift of rationality in order to share in God’s intelligent love for creation, to order, *‘cultivate and take care of it’* (Genesis 2:16). We are told in 2:5 that there was no bush or plant, and no man to care for the earth. God invites humans to work with him in caring for creation.

Freedom to flourish. God places the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden (Genesis 2:9). In 2:16–17, Man is invited to use the freedom to do God’s will. We also see in 2:18–24 the cooperation of man and woman, their complementarity.



A Comparison of Catholics’ and Humanists’ Views on Preserving the Planet and the Environment



Catholics see human beings as stewards, this is arguably our first religious duty

“God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it” Genesis 2:15

The Seventh Commandment is “you shall not steal” Exodus 20:15. Catholics believe that this “requires respect for the universal destination of goods” (CCC2401). The goods of the earth include a healthy environment and inhabitable planet as they are God’s gift to all people.

Humanists do not look to God/gods or the supernatural in order to understand how the universe works. They say that we should base the way we behave on natural empathy and a concern for human beings and other animals. Since they do not believe in either a life beyond this one or any purpose to the universe, they believe that human beings have to give meaning to their lives here and now by seeking happiness and helping others to do the same.

Humanists support birth-control programmes because they see overpopulation as a threat to preserving the planet and future happiness. Likewise, humanists are increasingly recognising the rights of animals over those of humans in order to avoid the accusation of ‘speciesism’ associated with thinkers like Peter Singer

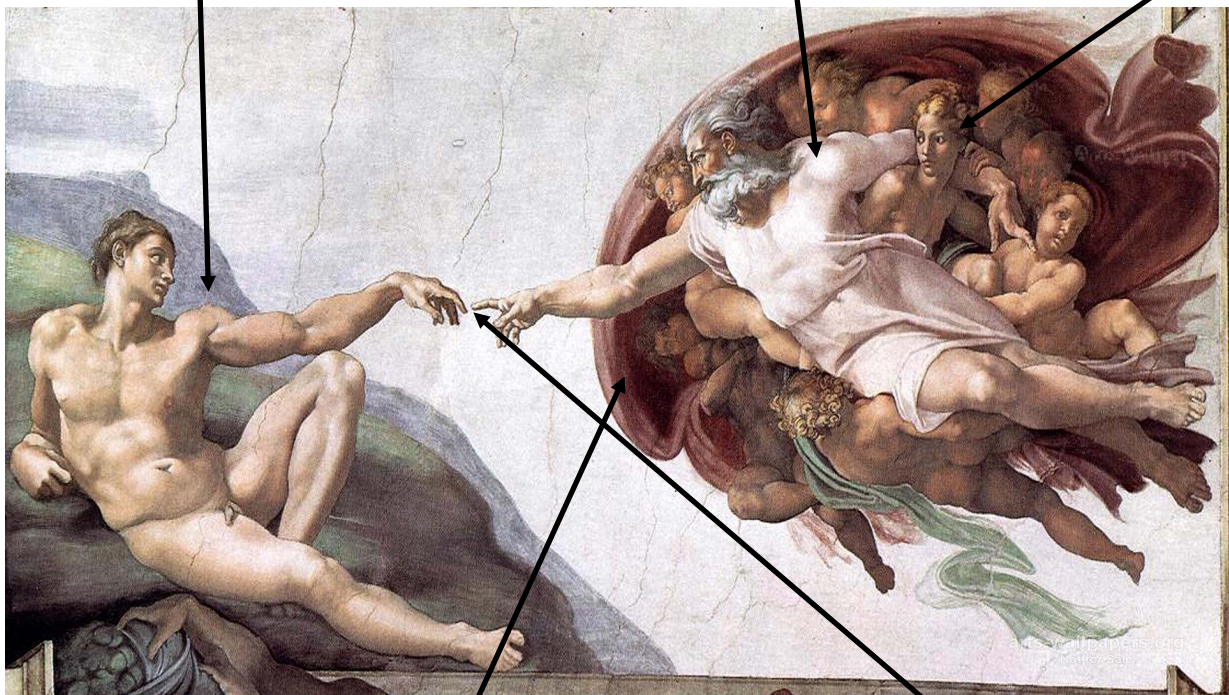
Catholic Understanding of Creation Expressed in Art

The Creation of Adam

Human beings, represented by Adam are sleepy, laid back, earth bound creatures.

God is eternal, bearded and much older than Adam, the relationship of a father and child. The red background could represent a womb and the green material hanging loose the umbilical cord which was cut loose by God in giving birth to us. We are his children, but in creating us with free will, he sets us free.

Could this be Eve, not yet created but already in the mind of God, part of his eternal plan?



God is the giver of life-sanctity of life

Imago Dei – Adam and God are very similar in their physical appearance, we reflect God.

A brain shaped cloud – could mean that God is the source of all intelligence, knowledge and wisdom.

God is an omnipotent Creator, a dynamic presence in the universe, full of energy and vitality.

God loves us first. His index finger is full of tension and energy as he reaches out to touch Adam's finger. Adam by contrast moves only a little, barely meeting God half way. Perhaps representing our spiritual sluggishness and our inability to do what God asks.

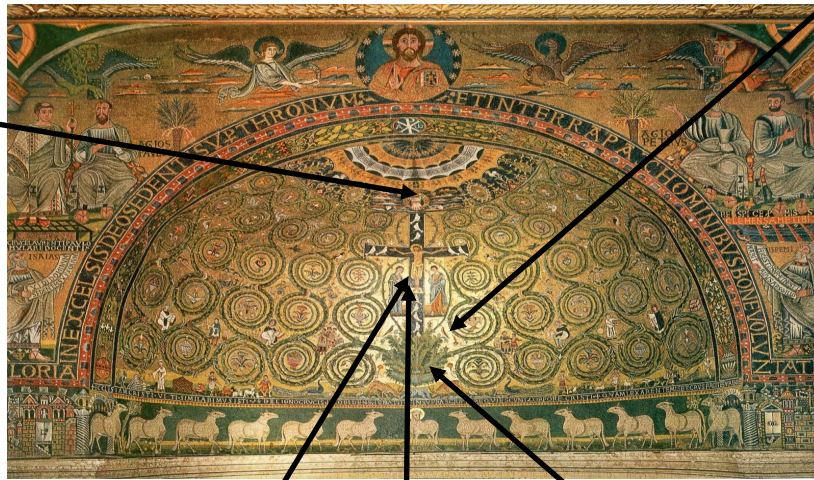
The Tree of Life

Mary and John (either side of the cross), as well as the nobles, peasants about their daily work, Fathers of the Church, saints and prophets, are symbolic of the fact that the Church is meant to include everyone.

The Vine as Christ – there is a lush green vine that winds all around the mosaic which is the symbol of Jesus, who said “I am the Vine” John 15:5

The hand of God the Father offering a wreath of victory to Christ.

The image of God's right hand is used often in artwork to symbolise God's power.



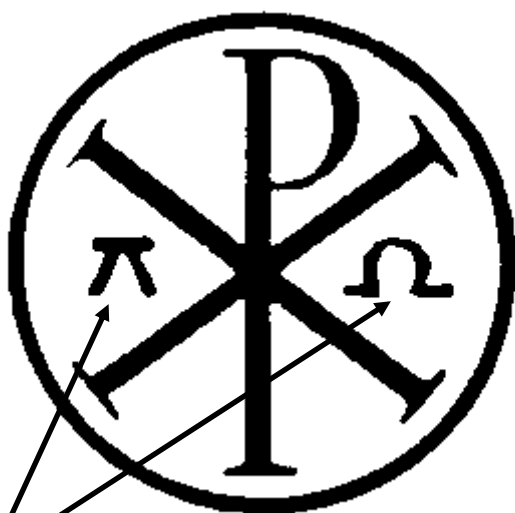
The cross as forgiveness. It is a mystery in itself that an instrument of execution has become for Christians a sign of hope, yet this is what a symbol can do. Sin associated with Adam and Eve is forgiven because Jesus died to save us from our sin.

At the base of the cross stands a tree, a symbol of the tree of life in Genesis 2:9 (also known as the tree of knowledge)

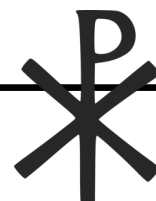
The cross as life. G.K Chesterton explains that the face of Christ “is radiant and like the sun at noon” because the mosaic is an image of life, not death.

The twelve doves symbolise the 12 chosen Apostles of Jesus.

12 is a symbolic number as it relates to the 12 tribes of Israel who God first made his covenant with. The 12 apostles take their place in the new covenant.



At the top of the mosaic you will see the first two letters of the word Christ in Greek and these are combined into a Christogram called the Chi-Rho. This symbol is still common in Catholic churches today and is often seen on baptismal candles, priestly vestments and sacred vessels.



The book of Revelation uses the symbolism of the Greek letters alpha and omega several times. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In Revelations God speaks of himself as Alpha and Omega and from the very earliest times Christians understood the title to refer to Jesus also.

Summary of the Symbolism

- The whole cosmos was created by God the Father through the Word of God.
- In time that Word became flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. He died to redeem sinful human beings on the wood of the Cross, which is therefore the tree of life.
- Jesus is also the Risen Lord, the all-powerful Judge of the universe that was created through him (Colossians 1:16).
- He is how humans find their meaning. The loving God who created us and who is the Father of us all seeks to unite us in Christ through the community of the Church as one family. Although sin divides us and turns us against one another, humanity must not forget its common origin in God and its destiny in God (Colossians 1:17).
- The victory of Christ has to be accepted in the life of each of us. The mosaic invites those who look at it to ponder its rich symbols and enter into the mystery of God, creation, and the battle between good and evil. It boldly asks which side we are on: are we for Life or for Death?

Imago Dei and Catholic Social Teaching



- For Catholics Genesis tells the truth that God is Creator of everything, that creation is “good” (Genesis 1:31) and that human beings were made in the image and likeness of God and given the task of caring for creation. Catholics call this task “stewardship of creation”
 - To care for creation means to protect and conserve it using the earth’s resources in a sustainable way. This benefits both the earth itself and human beings, especially the poorest people living in LEDC, who are most affected by climate change even though they have done the least to cause it.
 - For Catholics, considering those who are the poorest and most vulnerable first is always part of protecting the environment.
 - Pope Francis says that *“peace, justice and preservation of creation cannot be separated; every attempt to preserve ecology must take into account the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable people”* Laudato Si
-
- Members of the Catholic Church have always given selfless examples of respecting the dignity of each person through the service of others. Justice and charity have always been integral to how committed Catholics have lived their faith.
 - From 1962-1965, the world’s bishops gathered in Rome for the Second Vatican Council to discuss and make decisions on Church teachings. One document, *Gaudium et Spes*, which looked at the Church in the modern world, made it clear that the concept of the image of God has greatly influenced Church teaching on human dignity, equality, justice and peace.

The Work of CAFOD and SVP

Dignity is a key principle of Catholic Social Teaching; it is also one of CAFOD's key values: *'We believe in the intrinsic dignity of every person. We work with all people regardless of race, gender, religion or politics.'* CAFOD says that part of its vision is a world where 'the rights and dignity of every person are respected'.



When a lawyer asked, 'And who is my neighbour?', Jesus told him the story of the Good Samaritan showing neighbourly love to a wounded man from another culture who had nothing with which to repay the favour (Luke 10:25–37). At the end of the parable, Jesus said, 'Go, and do the same yourself.' 'Neighbour' need not be restricted to local people. Pope Benedict XVI wrote the following:

'Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbour. The concept of "neighbour" is now universalised, yet it remains concrete. Despite being extended to all mankind, it is not reduced to a generic, abstract and undemanding expression of love, but calls for my own practical commitment here and now.'

The Catholic Social Teaching principle 'stewardship of creation' is integral to CAFOD's work. CAFOD aims to promote human development while also protecting and sustaining the environment.

SVP

The Fundamental Principles of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul say that the Society's work 'involves all forms of aid by individual contact in order to promote the dignity and integrity of man'. Individual visits to people who are sick, lonely, addicted, imprisoned or coping with disability form a large proportion of the Society's work. SVP members aim to ensure that every person visited knows that he or she is valued and respected as an individual, and that there is someone they can turn to for a helping hand or a sympathetic ear.

St Vincent de Paul said: *'God does not consider the outcome of the good work undertaken but the charity that accompanied it'*. The SVP says that its vision is inspired by Christ's message to love our neighbour as ourselves. The Society is non-judgemental about those asking for assistance – it will help anyone in need, as long as the local membership is able to do so. In some areas, an SVP support centre, community shop or furniture store serves the most disadvantaged people in the neighbourhood.