

# Rencontres avec la Parole

*« Et Dieu vit que cela était bon »*



Département National d'Animation et de Pastorale Biblique  
Commission Épiscopale de Catéchèse et de Pastorale Biblique – CEA

Fuente: Subsidio 2021 “Y vió Dios que era muy bueno” (Gn 1,31) DeNAPBi



**Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup>**

***“And God saw that we were ‘Wow!’”  
(Gen 1:1-2:4a)***

### **INSIGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

Life is the greatest gift every being receives, the fundamental blessing from God, the only source of goodness and beauty. Without His creative Word, nothing would exist. This is one of the most beautiful truths that the first page of the Holy Scriptures reveals to us. However, the most significant dignity that could be attributed to any creature is what the text affirms about human beings: made in the image and likeness of God! “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness” (v. 26). Therefore, humanity’s value lies in being His most exalted representatives. According to the Bible, our reference point is not the animal kingdom, as we are not “rational animals,” nor is it the human race, as we cannot generate ourselves, but God Himself. This is indeed good news!

Therefore, every human being who wishes to be complete must strive to imitate what God does and how He does it. We only achieve fulfillment when our intelligence and will are at the service of love, as God loves. Our responsibility is enormous: we should not be tyrants driven by the desire to dominate or conquerors driven by the desire to subdue. Nor should we be autonomous or self-sufficient because our true identity is to be icons of love, tenderness, mercy, compassion, and justice, just like God.

When the time to evaluate came, the Creator first contemplated His work: “And God saw.” Then He considered it and, satisfied with what He has accomplished, declared that it is very good. Each creature brings Him satisfaction

and joy. It is as if He is saying to each one, “I’m glad that you exist like this” or “To me, you’re beautiful.”

However, the appreciation is even stronger and more beautiful regarding the human race. In the original Hebrew, the scope is emphatic. After the usual phrase, “God saw everything that He had made” (v. 31), the particle *hinneh* follows, giving the “very good” an undeniable exclamatory tone. It should be written between exclamation marks, and it is as if we added an energetic “Wow!” The interjection *hinneh* expresses God’s state of mind: He marvels, and He is happy. Such is the beauty and dignity of the human person that it elicits from God the first joyful exclamation of the entire Bible. Each of us is much more than “very good”: we are amazing, “Wow!” and incredible!

The challenge is to learn to view ourselves through God’s eyes, with tenderness, mercy, and appreciation. We must not allow harsh or loveless gazes toward ourselves or others to take up space in our hearts. Despite our limitations, faults, or sins, we are called to value ourselves and exclaim with emphasis, just as God did and continues to do. We can only say: “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful; I know that full well.” (Psalm 139:14). We are the pinnacle of creation, the most sublime and beautiful part of God’s entire creative plan.

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

**PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD.** *We read Genesis 1:1-2:4a*

### **READING: WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?**

1. What actions does God carry out when creating?
2. What correspondence is seen between the 1st day and the 4th, the 2nd and the 5th, the 3rd and the 6th?
3. What does “bless” mean in God’s language? See Gen 1:22,28 and Gen 2:3.
4. What relationship do you find between Gen 1 and Acts 17:28-29?
5. What analogies are there between Gen 1:1-2:4a and Gn 2:4b-25?

6. What is the difference between Gen 1:1 and 2 Mac 7:28?
7. What insights do Psalms 19 and 104 bring?

### **MEDITATION:** *WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY TO ME?*

#### **FIRST REFLECTION.** *We reflect on the following questions in silence:*

1. What struck you the most about the text?
2. Are you willing to let God order your chaos?
3. What chaotic situations do you want to present to Him today?
4. Do you believe in the effectiveness and efficiency of the Word of God?
5. How is your obedience to the Word of God?
6. What is the right attitude towards so much created wonder?

#### **SECOND REFLECTION.** *We share our reflections with everyone.*

### **PRAYER**

- We pray Psalm 136, repeating: *“For his mercy endures forever!”* (We can add intentions)
- We conclude with the prayer that Jesus taught us: *Our Father...*

### **COMMITMENT AND ACTIONS**

- What do I commit to - something very concrete - to care for and/or respect our common home?

**Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>**

***“Work in peace to earn your bread”  
(Gen 2:4-17)***

### **INSIGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

The second chapter of Genesis explores various themes, including God’s rest (vv. 1-3), the sky and earth at the beginning of creation (vv. 4-6), God molding the human being (vv. 7-17), God seeking to provide an appropriate companion for the man (vv. 18-20), God finding this suitable companion and creating woman from man (vv. 21-25).

During this discussion, we will focus on the formation of the human being (vv. 7-17), specifically on the task that this humanity was to fulfill in the Garden of Eden. Contrary to the belief that there was no work in Eden, humanity was entrusted with cultivating and caring for the earth to produce the fruits needed for daily sustenance. Humanity enjoyed what they produced in the garden, and thus work was not experienced as a heavy or bitter burden. Instead, it was a means to create the living conditions to sustain the life God gifted them. The toil and futility of work resulted from disobedience and fall, which would happen only later (see Gen 3:17-19).

The origin of work is described in the book of Genesis. In the opening passage, God is the first worker engaged in creating the world (Gen 1:1-15), and in Gen 1:31, when God saw the fruit of His labor, He considered it “very good.”

Out of all that God created, only human beings are made in His image and likeness (Gen 1:27). To be created in God’s image means having a purpose in

life; we are beings designed to perform a task. This gives us a unique position that no other creature on Earth can claim.

The purpose and reason we were created for could be stated as “To cultivate and care for the earth.” Some assume that this mandate implies that the earth was created solely for human use and exploitation. However, polluting water and air, destroying wildlife and animal habitats, or wasting natural resources does not align with God’s character or task entrusted to humanity. This implies that we worship and honor our Creator through our care for His creation.

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

**PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD.** *We read Genesis 2:4-17*

### **READING: WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?**

1. What characters appear in the narrative?
2. How is the Garden of Eden described?
3. What task does God entrust to man?
4. What command does God give to man?
5. What aspect of work does Deut 22:1-7 emphasize?
6. What does work provide for the human being according to 2 Thess 3:7-12?

### **MEDITATION: WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY TO ME?**

**FIRST REFLECTION.** *We reflect on the following questions in silence:*

1. What work experiences have I had in my life?
2. Have I ever been unemployed? How did I feel?
3. What fear did being without work provoke in me?

4. Do I work to live or live to work?
5. Do I enjoy my work or see it as a burden?

**SECOND REFLECTION.** *We share our reflections with everyone.*

### **PRAYER**

To each intention, we respond: “*St. Joseph the Worker, intercede for us.*”

- For those who suffer violence in the workplace, for those who live in precariousness and without social rights, let us pray...
- For women in the workplace, for victims of harassment and discrimination, let us pray...
- For labor organizations, that they may justly promote the legitimate interests of the community, let us pray...
- For the prosperity of companies, that they may serve the general welfare, let us pray...
- For public authorities, that they may guarantee social justice within and outside of companies, let us pray...
- For the Church, that we may be living and credible witnesses of God and his justice, let us pray...

(We can add intentions)

- We conclude with the prayer that Jesus taught us: Our Father...

### **COMMITMENT AND ACTIONS**

- How can I contribute with my work to the cultivation and care of Creation?



Wednesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>

*“Rest” (Gen 2:1-3)*

**INSIGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

Before starting with our prayerful study of the text, it is important to note that the brief biblical passage we will explore is preceded by the creation account, which concludes with the words: “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day” (Gen 1:31). Indeed, at the end of the sixth day, God confirms that everything he had made “was very good.” It should be noted that this differs from the other days, where it was said “it was good” (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), indicating that this “very good” at the end is the final word spoken about the entirety of the created work (the world and humanity) that comes from God. Thus, the first creation account introduces the seventh day, on which God rests, blesses, and sanctifies the Sabbath.

God honors the seventh day with a particular blessing and sets it apart from the other days by sanctifying it, reserving it all for Himself. The human being created on the sixth day, the last creature and the pinnacle of creation, made “in the image of God” (1:27), is not the last word in creation; even the human being is made for “another,” that is, for the seventh day, for the Sabbath on which creation finds its completeness and meaning.

The Sabbath is the moment in the life of the human being, who is the ruler of creation, in which he remembers, lives, and recognizes that he is not the Lord and that only God is the absolute Lord. Therefore, if the seventh day is the time of contemplation of the created world by God, this also applies to the human being, His favorite creature, the only one made in His “image and likeness,” who must rest to share in God’s joy in the goodness of things.

The seventh day is the day of perfection because, according to the Hebrew mindset (6: indeterminate, unfulfilled time and 7: conclusion, fulfillment, perfection), the Sabbath crowns the preceding six days. According to the biblical author, God uses a specific time to create the universe, and that time has an end because all of God's creative action tends toward the seventh day. Thus, the created world achieves its harmonious and complete fulfillment when it enters the seventh day, on which God, ceasing to work, rests to contemplate and enjoy His work.

The biblical author uses the verb “*šhabat*” from which the noun “*šabbat*: Sabbath” comes, to express this action of “ceasing to work.” Therefore, God's behavior of working and resting becomes an exemplary model for the human being created in His image and likeness.

Therefore, Sabbath is dedicated to rest, which is the primary way to make it holy. No other rules are required for Saturday besides resting, as God did (cf. Exod 20:8-11). This healthy mindset prevents work from becoming the sole purpose of life, turning people into slaves (cf. Deut 5:12-15). The command to rest reminds human beings that although they must work during the week to manage the created world, they must also rest to praise the true Creator and Lord of creation. The Sabbath is a declaration of the dominance of humanity over the tasks that need to be accomplished (cf. Exod 34:21). But above all, the Sabbath must be a “reminder” of the gift of freedom (cf. Deut 5:13-15), the gift of the Covenant with God (cf. Exod 31:12-17), and the gift of life (cf. Exod 20:8-11).

## **OPENING PRAYER:**

**PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD.** *We read Genesis 2:1-3*

## **READING: WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?**

1. Read the complete story of Genesis 1:1-2:4.
2. What evaluation does God make of his own work?
3. How is God's rest described?
4. What do the two verbs “bless” and “sanctify” mean?
5. Why should human beings rest?

## **MEDITATION: *WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY TO ME?***

### **FIRST REFLECTION. *We reflect on the following questions in silence:***

1. Why does the biblical text present creation in a week?
2. What is the significance of working for six days and resting for one day?
3. How do I live my work week?
4. How do I live my rest?
5. How do I bless and sanctify Sunday?
6. What is the right attitude towards so much created wonder?

### **SECOND REFLECTION. *We share our reflections with everyone.***

## **PRAYER**

### **TO EACH INVOCATION, WE RESPOND: *“Thank you, Lord, for the gift of life!”***

- Thank you for the precious work of creation...
- Thank you for giving us the gift of life and family...
- Thank you for health and the opportunity to work...
- Thank you for rest...
- Thank you for the Sunday assembly...  
*(We can add intentions)*
- We conclude with the prayer that Jesus taught us: Our Father...

## **COMMITMENT AND ACTIONS**

- What attitudes and behaviors do I need to change to live and appreciate God’s gratuitousness, learning to rest and worship the Lord?

**Thursday, April 20<sup>th</sup>**

***“You must open your hand to your brother”  
(Deut 15:7-11)***

### **INSIGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

The text we will use for our prayerful reflection is found within the so-called Deuteronomistic Code (Deut chs. 12–26). Although it likely originated in the Northern Kingdom, there is no doubt that it gained prominence with the reform of King Josiah.

One of the constant concerns of the nation was its poor, particularly since the growth of cities. Before its God, Israel considered itself poor, and it recognized that God had constant mercy on the nation; therefore, it was also a task of Israel to care for its poor. Moreover, they always prayed with thanksgiving, recognizing that their Creator had given them food at the right time (cf. Ps 145:15-16) and had cared for them abundantly in the desert (cf. Exod ch. 16).

The Deuteronomist’s great social sensitivity prompts him to emphasize the importance of preventing inevitable human limitations from evolving into permanent states of social imbalance among God’s chosen people. Deuteronomy presents a utopian and revolutionary perspective on poverty. The author acknowledges its existence in such words as: “If there is a poor person among your brothers...” (15:7), or “there will always be poor people in the land” (15:11). However, the author urges the community to find solutions for everyday situations of poverty so that it doesn’t become a permanent state within the community. Therefore, v. 14, states in the form of a commandment, “There shall be no poor among you.” By addressing poverty daily with deeds, the community can prevent the emergence of a permanent poor social class.

Despite being a divine commandment, the people of Israel did not always adhere to this principle. Jesus criticizes the Jews for nullifying God's commandment to preserve their interests and traditions, making excuses not to help the poor (cf. Matt 15:6) adequately.

Even so, Jesus surpasses the Deuteronomic and Levitical law by suggesting that the poor should always be liberated from their hardships, not just every seven years as commanded by the Law (cf. Luke 12:33-34).

Deuteronomy emphasizes that overcoming poverty is everyone's responsibility and highlights the importance of social practices such as debt forgiveness. The dominant social structure in Israel made it challenging to envision a society without poor people. Still, the Deuteronomist's revolutionary thinking aimed to create a community where poverty is not permanent.

According to the text, the community's efforts to address poverty will be rewarded with God's blessings on the land. Ultimately, the victims of economic, social, political, cultural, ethnic, and racial crises are all our brothers, and we should strive to help them overcome their daily hardships. "Surely there should be no poor among you" (v.4), stated the text, but the motivation and reason for the pursuit of social justice are also added: "God will grant his blessing on the land he is giving you as property."

## **OPENING PRAYER:**

**PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD.** *We read Deuteronomy 15:7-11*

## **READING: WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?**

1. What will Israel find in the land that God will give them?
2. What attitude should not be taken towards the poor?
3. What should be done to the poor?
4. What relationship do you find with Is 1:16-17?
5. What does God do for those who care for the poor?
6. What does God promise those who open their hearts to the poor?

## **MEDITATION:** *WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY TO ME?*

### **FIRST REFLECTION.** *We reflect on the following questions in silence:*

1. Have I seen poor people in my land (neighborhood, community, area)?
2. What feelings or thoughts does this awaken in me?
3. How do I live out the commands of the text that was read?
4. How do I manage the goods that God has given me? (see *Laudato Si*, 93-95)
5. When I tackle the drama of poverty according to my possibilities, what feelings does it provoke in me?

### **SECOND REFLECTION.** *We share our reflections with everyone.*

## **PRAYER**

To each invocation, we respond: *“Lord, open my heart to all my brothers and sisters.”*

- So that I may be moved by the poverty that exists...
- So that with my goods, I may help those in need...
- So that we may listen to Jesus’ call to serve the poor...
- So that in our communities, we may work in solidarity for the poor...
- So that we may preach the Gospel of sharing...

*(We can add intentions)*

- We conclude with the prayer that Jesus taught us: Our Father...

## **COMMITMENT AND ACTIONS**

- We read Mt 25:31-46 and chose a work or commitment during this time.

**Friday, April 21<sup>st</sup>**

***“Jesus Christ, the Firstborn of all Creation”***  
***(Col 1:15-20)***

**INSIGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

The text for our prayerful reflection begins by formulating two Christological titles. First, Jesus is defined as an “Image of the invisible God,” which expresses the relationship of the Son with God and means that Jesus participates in the transcendence of God and makes it present. Second, Jesus is the “Firstborn of all creation,” which indicates the relationship of the Son with creatures: He existed before all creation. This statement has as its backdrop the figure of personified Wisdom (cf. Prov 3:19), who was created by divinity at the beginning (cf. Prov 8:22; Sir 24:9).

Verse 16 has causal conjunction (“because”), which declares his role as mediator in the creative process, followed by the expression “were created,” which indicates that creation is the work of the Father. However, God used mediation (expressed with the prepositions “in,” and “through”) to indicate that all creation finds its origin, foundation, and final goal in Christ. The author uses antithetical parallelism (heaven-earth; visible-invisible) to express the idea of totality. He also names four realities with the terminology of power: “thrones, dominions, principalities, powers.” No power or being of the invisible world is outside the dominion of Jesus Christ or his creative mediation (2:10, 15).

Verse 17 summarizes the two titles with a double declaration: Jesus “is before all things,” understood as both temporal and hierarchical priority and function. And “in him, all things hold together,” all creation is founded in Christ.

The term “head” used in verse 18 is not biological (cf. 1 Cor 12:21) but of authority or leadership, as is clear from the context (2:10). It declares the total

lordship of Christ over the Church and the complete dependence of the Church on the Son since she is the body of Christ.

The title “beginning” is from the Wisdom tradition (cf. Prov 8:22) and designates the new beginning from the resurrection. The title “firstborn” is qualified by the expression “from the dead,” indicating his resurrection. It is a beginning, a hope for all. The final proposition (18c) explains the accumulation of titles: to underline the primacy of the Son on all levels and in all dimensions. The verb “to have a first place” expresses temporal or local priority and the primacy of dignity.

Verse 19 explains why and in what sense Jesus has primacy over all things providing two reasons. The first reason is theological. The expression “God was pleased to have all fullness dwell in him” indicates the “fullness of divinity” (2:9). God has chosen to be present, to dwell totally, stably, and definitively in the historical bodily humanity of Jesus.

The second reason is soteriological: the universal reconciliation wrought through Christ (20a), the gift of peace obtained through the blood of his cross (20c). The expression is a sign of Christ’s personal sacrifice, indicating the price of this reconciliation. Verse 19 emphasizes that the Father has placed the “fullness” of salvific gift in Christ, accessible to all people through his unique and universal mediation historically enacted in his death.

## **OPENING PRAYER:**

**PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD.** *We read Colossians 2:15-20*

## **READING: WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?**

1. Check the notes in your Bible about the false doctrines that existed in Colossae.
2. With what words is the centrality of Jesus Christ affirmed?
3. With what antithetical expressions does it indicate the totality of creation?
4. What terms indicated power in those times?



5. What verse highlights the primacy of the Son in all levels and dimensions?
6. How is the Paschal Mystery of Christ expressed in this hymn?

### **MEDITATION:** *WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY TO ME?*

#### **FIRST REFLECTION.** *We reflect on the following questions in silence:*

1. Do I believe that God, the author of life, has designed everything for our salvation?
2. Do we have political, economic, or religious influences today that try to impose their lordship over the world? Which ones?
3. Creation and salvation are inseparable concepts in the Bible. How do I experience these essential concepts in my life?
4. Do I admire, enjoy, care for, and defend all creation as God's work?
5. Do I live the experience of the lordship of Jesus Christ in my present?

#### **SECOND REFLECTION.** *We share our reflections with everyone.*

### **PRAYER**

To each invocation, we respond: *“Christ Jesus, the visible image of the Father, strengthen our faith.”*

- Accepting God's creator and savior project in our lives...
- Valuing the Earth as the common home of all...
- Denouncing ecological destruction and the suffering of the poor...  
*(We can add intentions)*
- We conclude with the prayer that Jesus taught us: Our Father...

### **COMMITMENT AND ACTIONS**

- Commit to caring for the environment and protecting nature in a concrete way.