the CATHOLIC NAVIGATOR

Charting a Course to Christ

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Be Still and Know That I Am God.

Psalm 46:10

Each Evangelist reveals a perspective unique to himself. Mark's Gospel, the briefest, devotes the largest percentage of space to the Passion of Jesus Christ. It is direct, its pace, urgent. Mark challenges us with his first sentence: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Such simple and blunt language leaves the careful reader a bit stunned. Truth is like this. The only 'freedom' in a conversation between an Objective Truth (unchanging, never-ending; God) and a subjective reality (changing, mortal; the person) is the person's reaction to the message. Truth does not change because the Word does not change.

Mark's Truth-claim, "Jesus Christ, Son of God," will never change, no matter the wants of an individual. Tasked with passing on God's Truth, Mark is not concerned with who will be alarmed or offended, or who will try to soften, change, or update this message. Mark envisions only two responses to the Truth that is Jesus: believe in Him and proclaim this to the world, or reject Him and go the way of the anonymous masses.

We are all left to do what we are created to do: choose. Our choice does not change the nature of the Truth, but it does reveal our attitudes, our emotions, and passions (joy, sorrow, fear, hope) concerning this truth. This self-revelation is the beginning of our spiritual path. This is the ground we will cover this year as we walk with the Lord through our days and prayers.



Tradition, Tradition!

A look at traditions that have emerged over countless years of continuous salvation history…

"In the beginning
God created the heavens and the earth…"

The Bible's opening verse moves together with the speed of the Holy Spirit: "and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters." (Gen. 1:2b) Like the Breath of God, it often sweeps past us, without due notice.

This year, as we look more closely at Creation, we shall frequently return to the words of Genesis 1-3. Likewise, in reviewing the traditions flowing from Creation, we will sense the awe and wonder so proper upon meeting the Divine. We will know better who we are, and for what we are meant.

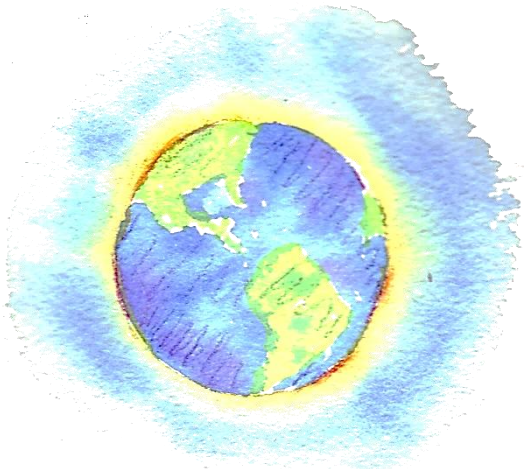
Gerard Manley Hopkins' famous line, "The earth is charged with the grandeur of God," came about only because he was graced by a God Who enveloped his soul and filled him with fire. We, too, can know this Love, this Fire. On our path through Creation, let us acknowledge Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, hallmarks of the Eternal Love Who created us. Let us open our souls to the incomprehensible majesty gently stirring the love lying deep, and fully feel God's breath within us. This is the wellspring of the Catholic Tradition.

At our core we long for a love like that of our God, a love that fills and heals, and completes us. We yearn to bow, and sing, and give thanks in worship. This is the impetus for our first tradition: worship. This is the primal practice of the heart, 'ever restless until it rests in Thee, Lord.' We are made to worship, and if we don't worship God, we will worship something other.

Genesis teaches us how to frame our reason and our imagination. Read properly, in quiet stillness, we can be brought to the threshold of the sacred, where tears meet joy and our thanksgiving is indescribable. We are God's creation. Let us begin, "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth…*"

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7
Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:33-37





SCRIPTURAL Secrets

"No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any God but You doing such deeds for those who wait for Him." (Is. 4:3) Isaish's ecstasy at the Lord's Presence, conveyed in today's First Reading, calls us to master our time and effort so as to appreciate the spectacular gift of our very existence as well as the magnificence of the divine Gift-Giver. 'Stop! Look!'

Note that this awareness of God brings a longing that cannot be totally satisfied. We live a divided life, between places. Our body is material, while our soul is spiritual. Our hope is that body and soul tend toward the same goal. Indeed, we might live in confidence while our heart laments: "Why do You let us wander, O LORD, from Your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear You not?"

Jesus was firm, 'No one knows the day or the hour' (Mt. 24:36), yet He implies that we are to 'interpret the signs of the times' (Mt 16:3). He cautioned about the fool preoccupied with amassing riches, not knowing his life would be exacted that same night (Lk. 12:13–21), then reminds us in a parable to 'trim the wicks and have oil at the ready' (Mt. 25:1-13). We are to be alert, to watch for Christ's Second Coming at the end of our Liturgical Year (Christ the King), while preparing for His first coming at this Year's beginning (Advent).

How are we to develop a proper balance, between places, between times, within a nature both animal and spirit? Our tradition urges us to live within the tension of 'already and not yet' as we go through our day, our week, and our year. This path also shows us how to live in God's time and place, the silent stillness and still silence where He awaits us at every moment of the Liturgical calendar: "Watch, therefore… May He not come suddenly and find you sleeping." And never venture forth without the light of Jesus Christ.

With Christ's first arrival in just a few weeks, and His final coming, we know not when, the only advent-watchfulness remaining is for His acceptance of the invitation we extend to Him to live in us.

Catechetical Corner

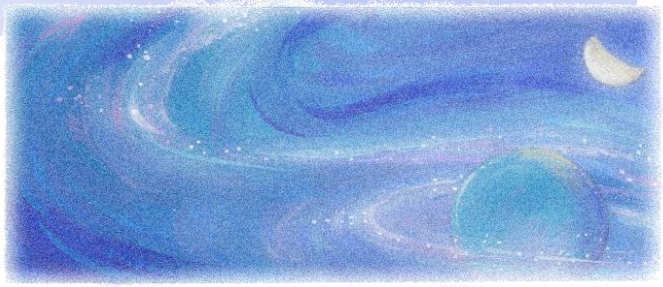
All of Creation begins with God: "*God our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*." (*CCC, Prologue*) To come to this 'knowledge of truth,' requires our sacred imagination.

From our perspective, the universe is unimaginably huge, and expanding. Yet, situated *WITHIN* an infinite God, the universe is but a speck, a playpen where He keeps us safe. Created for us, the 'universe' seems rightly proportioned to ever inform and reveal the God-given Truth, Goodness, and Beauty intended for us.

Our Creator's love is such that He willed us into a universe within Himself, filling it with things and patterns that reveal His being and His action. We have been given what is necessary to know and love Him, and to be sustained by Him in every moment, without squelching our free choice:

> "God, infinitely perfect and blessed in Himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in His own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek Him, to know Him, to love Him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of His family, the Church."" (*CCC 1*)

This year's journey begins in awe and wonder. Feeling profoundly our 'littleness,' enveloped by the astonishing love of our God, we respond in adoration, thanksgiving, and joy. "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth beneath." (1 Kings 8:23a)



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