

The Human Person

Core Activity

The Journey of Creation

1. Write the following statement on the board, on newsprint, or on an overhead: "We believe that God speaks to us through creation."

2. Instruct the students to go outside for 10 minutes. Ask them to refrain from talking with one another and to instead concentrate on observing their surroundings. (If going outside is not feasible, display visual images of creation, such as art depicting the whole earth, plants, water, and dirt. Include things that people had a hand in creating, such as a map that represents your city's system of roads, a loaf of bread, or a telephone. Also invite the young people to focus on the things already present in the classroom.)

3. After 10 minutes invite the students to talk about their observations in groups of two or three. Mention that they should report what they saw, heard, touched, smelled, felt, thought, and so forth.

4. Explain that the statement written on the board expresses a belief at the heart of Catholicism. Urge the students to discuss that statement in their small groups and to answer the following questions:

- When is this statement easiest to believe?
- When is this statement hardest to believe?
- What does this belief tell us about God's relationship with us?
- What does it tell us about our responsibility for creation?

Provide an opportunity for some large-group feedback.

5. Ask each small group to take three sheets of paper. Note that at the top of each sheet, they should write one of the following headings:

- Cooperation
- Lack of Cooperation
- Ambiguous

Explain that the students are to work in their small groups to come up with situations and events in the world that fit those categories as they are described in the following list, and to write those situations and events under the appropriate headings on the sheets of paper:

- stories that illustrate human cooperation with God's creation and purposes
- stories that illustrate a lack of cooperation with God
- stories that are ambiguous, that is, that group members cannot place into either of the other categories

6. Invite each small group to share its findings with the class. Conclude by revisiting the notions that creation is journeying toward completion and that God calls us to be coworkers. Highlight some of the examples of human cooperation that surfaced during the discussion.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

Core Activity Extension

Sin and Evil

As homework or class work, invite the students to imagine what their world—or their city or town—would look like without sin. Ask them to create newspaper headlines that depict some of the events they imagine. If you are doing this in class, try to keep the students in the same small groups used for the core activity. Also have each student turn in a brief paper or report on her or his vision for a world without sin. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

Additional Activities

The Games We Play

1. Brainstorm a list of games with the students. This list may include games from their childhood, board games, computer games, sports, TV game shows, and so on. Record the games on the board, on newsprint, or on an overhead.



2. Divide the students into groups of three or four. Tell each group to select one game from the list. Distribute copies of the handout “Games” (Document #: TX03178) and direct each group to discuss its chosen game using the questions on the handout.

3. Conclude by asking the students how this activity relates to our responsibility for caring for God’s creation. If necessary, to spur thinking, ask the students to consider the following questions:

- How does cooperation affect creation?
- What are some examples of competition that is negatively affecting our ability, as a society, to care for the earth?
- Describe a situation in which competition has had or could have a positive impact on creation.

- Do you think a strong competitive spirit is more a help or a hindrance in caring for God's creation? Why?

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

The Earth Is the Lord's

Have the students view and discuss the 13-minute film *The Earth Is the Lord's* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], no. 058-3, \$14.95; available from USCCB Publishing, 800-235-8722, www.usccb.org). Use the guide that accompanies the film to lead a discussion with the class. Be prepared to summarize the key themes presented in the core activity and in the film. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

Stewardship

Invite the students to select an issue related to the work of creation and to learn more about it by searching the Internet and visiting the library. A sampling of issues to consider is hunger, global energy resources, labor practices, clean water, and healthy lifestyles. Invite them to write a research paper on the issue, identify an action related to the issue, and then perform the action. Encourage the students to share what they learn and to suggest specific ways their peers can help care for creation. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

Sinners and Saints

Have each student select and research a saint or holy person who has had a dramatic conversion. Instruct the students to write a reflection paper on the person's struggle with good and evil and the person's life before and after conversion. Some suggestions are the historic saints Francis of Assisi, Augustine of Hippo, and Ignatius of Loyola, and the more contemporary holy people Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

"Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation"

Ask your class to read Pope John Paul II's 1990 World Day of Peace message "Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation," on the Vatican Web site, at www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/. Use one of the following activities to help the students explore that message:

- Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one of the major sections from the message to read and present to the class.
- Assign each student two or three points from the message to read and summarize.
- As a class, discuss specific issues raised in the message.
- Ask your students each to write a brief reflection paper on what they learned from the message.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

What Do You Eat?

Direct your students to list the foods they have eaten over the past few days. Have them research a few of the foods on their lists and try to answer these questions:

- How, where, and by whom were the foods produced? [They might try getting information from their grocers and from the Internet.]
- Do the foods come to you through processes in which humans are taking care of creation and cooperating with God? Why or why not?

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Creed* manual.)

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