

ARCHDIOCESAN-WIDE RETREAT

CHRIST THE KING - CHRISTMAS



Participant Guide

Each week, these guides are meant to be used by individuals and groups to launch from the Sunday homilies during the archdiocesan retreat into prayerful reflection and dialogue. Take this guide to a holy hour, a dinner conversation with your children, or your regular small group as food for reflection and conversation, all based on the previous Sunday's homily.

WEEK 2: CREATED

During this week's homily, we heard the answer to the question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" Science can tell us how the universe has unfolded, but it cannot tell us why it exists. Revelation is how God shows us the answer to that question.

As we heard, God created everything in the universe out of love and we, humanity, are the pinnacle of God's creation.

God did not have a need to create. In the Trinity, he is complete. He simply wanted us to be. As such, all of creation in its incredible magnitude is a sign of the power and love of God in a way that should make us wonder and be in awe at God who created all things.

God doesn't rest until after he creates humanity. This reveals to us the grandeur of our human nature and shows what we are made for — to be loved by God, love him in return, and live in a relationship of love with our neighbors. Thus, God created everything because he loves you personally. It can be tough to accept that God loves us individually and that he cares about our lives, knows each of us by name, and knows all the details of our life. "Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed. Each of us is loved. Each of us is necessary." (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI).

We often find it hard to believe that God loves us personally because we think of him as a far-away cosmic being who is not personal or accessible. Thus, we treat him in a detached and distant manner. But imagine what it would be like if God were right here beside you. God truly is that close to us and his love is very real. Today, he invites you to discover just how real and close his love is for you and how present that is in his creation.



Read

Consider beginning your time of prayer or conversation with reading, prayer and discussion around the below passages from the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. With the Scripture, you can use the ancient method of *Lectio Divina*.

- » Genesis 1: 1-27
- » Isaiah 45:18-19
- » Romans 8:35-39
- » Genesis 2:1-23
- » Isaiah 49:15-16
- » CCC 279-354

CCC 733: God is love and love is his first gift, containing all others. God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Reflect and Write

- » What images of creation instill the most awe and wonder in your heart and mind?
- » Write down what strikes you about God's personal love in these passages. What qualities of God's love are expressed?
- » In what moments or experiences in your life have you felt loved by God? Why?
- » In what moments or experiences in your life have you felt distant from God's love? Why?
- » What invitation is God giving you through the homily and the passages above?

Discuss

- » What was your greatest takeaway from the "created" homily this week?
- » How has pondering the grandeur of creation instilled a sense of awe and wonder in your life? Has it changed your image of God? Explain.
- » How would you describe God's love in light of the homily, the Scripture verses, your reflections, and any personal experiences? Has it changed your image of his love? Explain.
- » How and through whom have you experienced God's love in your life?
- » What kind of an effect does pondering the grandeur of God's creation and God's love for you have on you? What is stirring in your heart as you think about God's love for you? What is something you want to commit to as a way to strengthen your relationship with God following this time?



Pray

God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I thank you for your love for me. You are love itself and you never cease to shower me with your love in so many ways. Today, help me to accept this love and to grow in the conviction that you love me personally, having inscribed me in the palm of your hand. Allow me to know that this love is very real, proven in your creation, and freely offered to me as a gift. Help me to experience anew in my heart the child-like confidence and trust to go to you and give my love to you and receive your love freely. Allow me to stand in wonder as I marvel at the beauty and majesty of your creation. Grant me the grace of being in awe as I contemplate the genius and goodness in everything you have created, beginning with me. Continue to change my heart where it needs to be changed, that the eyes of my heart and soul might behold the truth of your love and see your creation as it truly was meant to be. I love you, my Lord and my God. Amen.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

Go Deeper

- » “Who are you?” - The Search, episode 2 - FORMED.org
- » “Bishop Barron on Creation” - YouTube video

