

### **Created for Paradise**

- 374 We humans were created good.  
We lived in friendship with God  
and in harmony with the rest of creation.
- 375 One might say that we humans  
lived in a state of original grace,  
sharing in the divine life.  
We can still glimpse this original holiness  
when we reach those moments of peace,  
when we pause to sense the divine presence  
around us.  
We sometimes experience  
a sense of overall well-being,  
of absolute harmony:  
376 profound inner unity,  
love with our spouse,  
and peace with God.
- 377 We're able to live as God wants, then,  
to be in control of our senses, as it were,  
and not be subject to lust,  
greed,  
or lording it over others.
- 378 The story in Genesis uses figurative language  
to describe how God desired for us  
to work with God  
in maintaining the balance of life.  
What a pleasure it was for us to tend the garden  
as coworkers with the Creator!
- 379 God, we might say,  
put us in that garden  
and directed us toward the goal  
of sharing divine perfection.

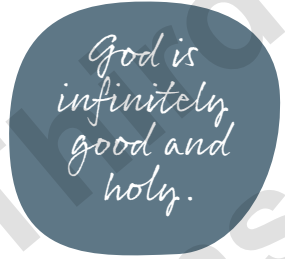


*We  
humans  
were  
created  
good.*

We, for our part, as is well known,  
did not achieve that goal.  
We missed the mark, as it were,  
and wandered into selfishness and sin.

### The Reality of Evil

385 One need not look any further  
than the daily news  
to see that evil exists in our world.  
Who can escape it?  
And yet...  
God is infinitely good and holy.  
All of creation is good.



386 So, where does evil come from?  
To fully understand sin,  
we must examine our relationship with God  
because we reject this relationship,  
based on love and harmony,  
in favor of our own futile plan.  
And what is our plan?  
It is not to be in a relationship  
but instead to be unilateral.

387 On its bottom line,  
sin is an abuse of the freedom to love  
which God gives to us all.  
Instead, we become selfish and unilateral:  
we use sex to satisfy our lust,  
we use money to satisfy our greed,  
we use others to satisfy our dominance.  
We see only one side of life:  
our side.

Sin is not merely some psychological flaw,  
or a mere mistake,  
or the result of our upbringing,  
whatever that might have been.

We do have such psychological scars, indeed,  
but most are not sinful  
and many can be healed.

We do make mistakes, no doubt about it.  
And for some people,  
emotional injury from family life  
does seem to set destructive patterns  
into motion.

But sin is beyond all of this.  
It is an outright rejection of love.  
In sin, we miss the mark of love,  
set for us by our Maker.



388 In Christ, we see sin's opposite:  
we see a man who was unwilling  
to be unilateral  
and who called us all back to love.

Christ reveals to us what sin is really all about  
because he sacrificed everything—  
everything, including his own life,  
rather than ever give up his love.

389 In this, Christ provides us  
with the grace to overcome sin ourselves  
and live in the divine light once again.

All human beings require this grace  
because all human beings miss the mark.

We all disobey God.

We all fail to love.

Fortunately for us and for all women and men,  
we have a new law in Christ.

## GROUP OR PERSONAL PROCESS

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*In your own words, describe the temptation to be selfish and unilateral. Where does it come from? What can overpower it?*

*What are the greatest temptations to be selfish that we face today in the world?*

*What amount of money, pleasure, or power would cause you to violate your love for others? What would it take to abandon your faith and seek only your own gain?*