



Creation Sketchbook

An art retreat by Christopher Alt, SJ

Name: _____

The creative process is an opportunity for self-discovery. Since we are created in the image and likeness of God, every self-discovery is a further revelation of God alive in us. Challenge yourself to explore your own creativity and find God in the gift of artistic reflection.

Dear Merciful God,

*Allow our creative minds
To prosper in Your love.
Teach us to express ourselves
The way You do above.
Bless our imagination,
It lets us dream, and we believe
That with your trust and guidance
There is glory to achieve.*

Amen.

Part One: *Create & Reflect*

1. Scripture Reading

The Book of Genesis, The Creation Story

2. Drawing Experience

Silent Sketching

3. Reflection

Thoughtful Meditation



Rev. Sammy Chong, S.J., The Wonderer, 2015

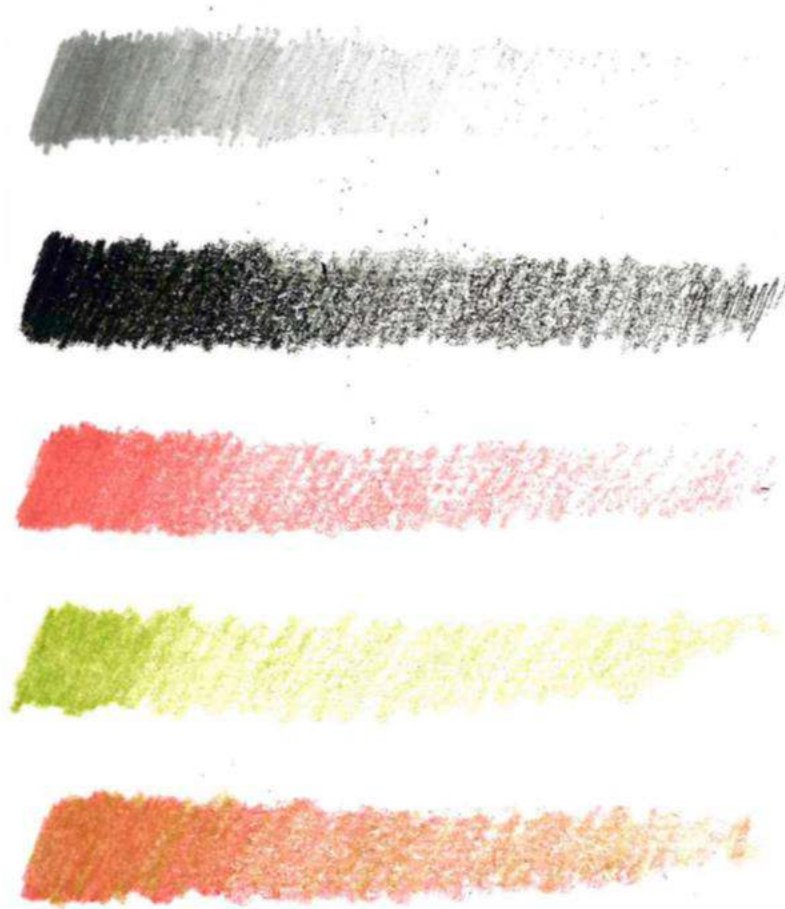
What we are living now is a place of 'metanoia' (conversion), and we have the chance to begin...So, let's not let it slip from us, and let's move ahead....I'm living this as a time of great uncertainty. It's a time for inventing, for creativity.

– Pope Francis, April 2020

DAY ONE

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.



Reflection Questions for DAY ONE

1. What are the most important 'beginning' moments in your spiritual life?
2. How and in what ways does the light of faith help you see things differently?
3. In what ways do you resist the light of faith? What is behind this resistance?

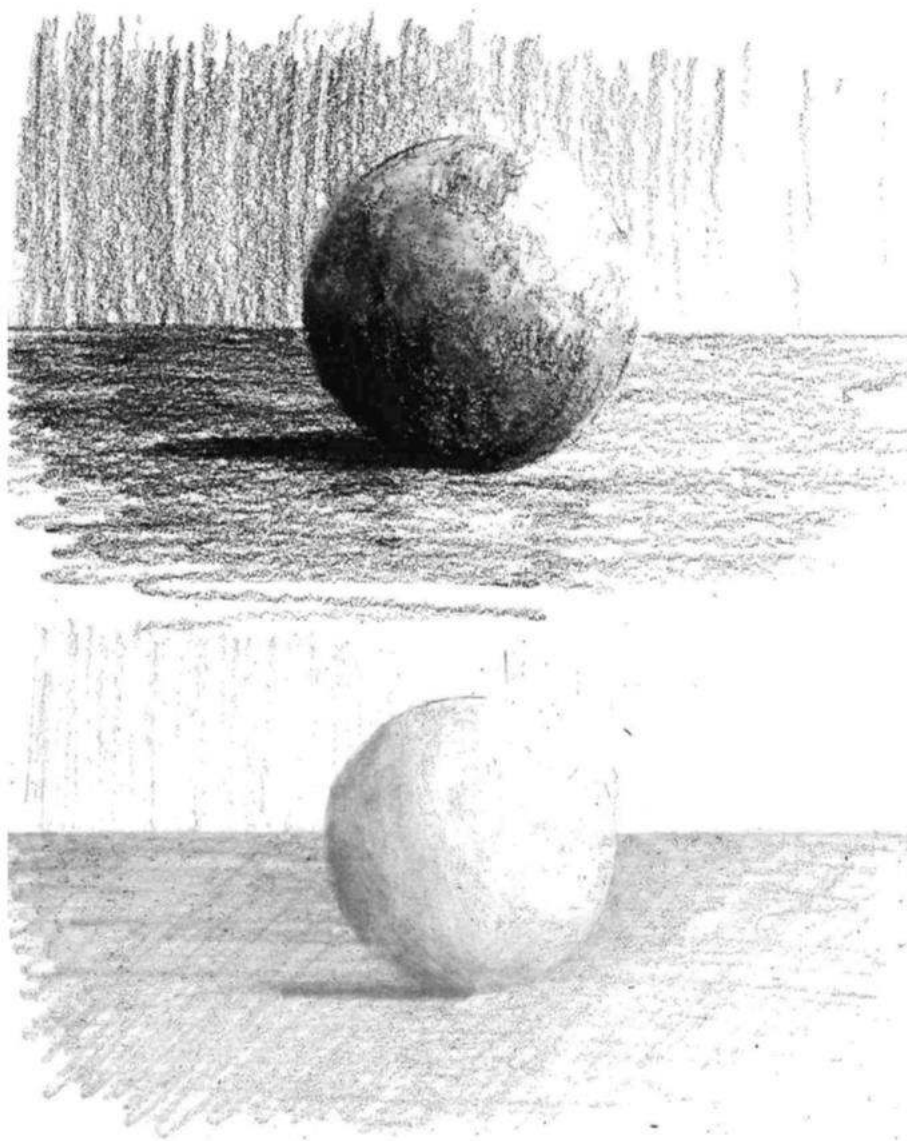
SKETCH ONE

Element of Design: Value

Materials: Pencil, Charcoal Pencil, Pastel Pencil

DAY TWO

⁶ And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.



Reflection Questions for DAY TWO

1. How comfortable are you with the “slow work of God”?
2. What in your life remains blurry, that you’d like more clarity on and courage with?
3. What are the most important “everyday sacraments” of your life?

SKETCH TWO

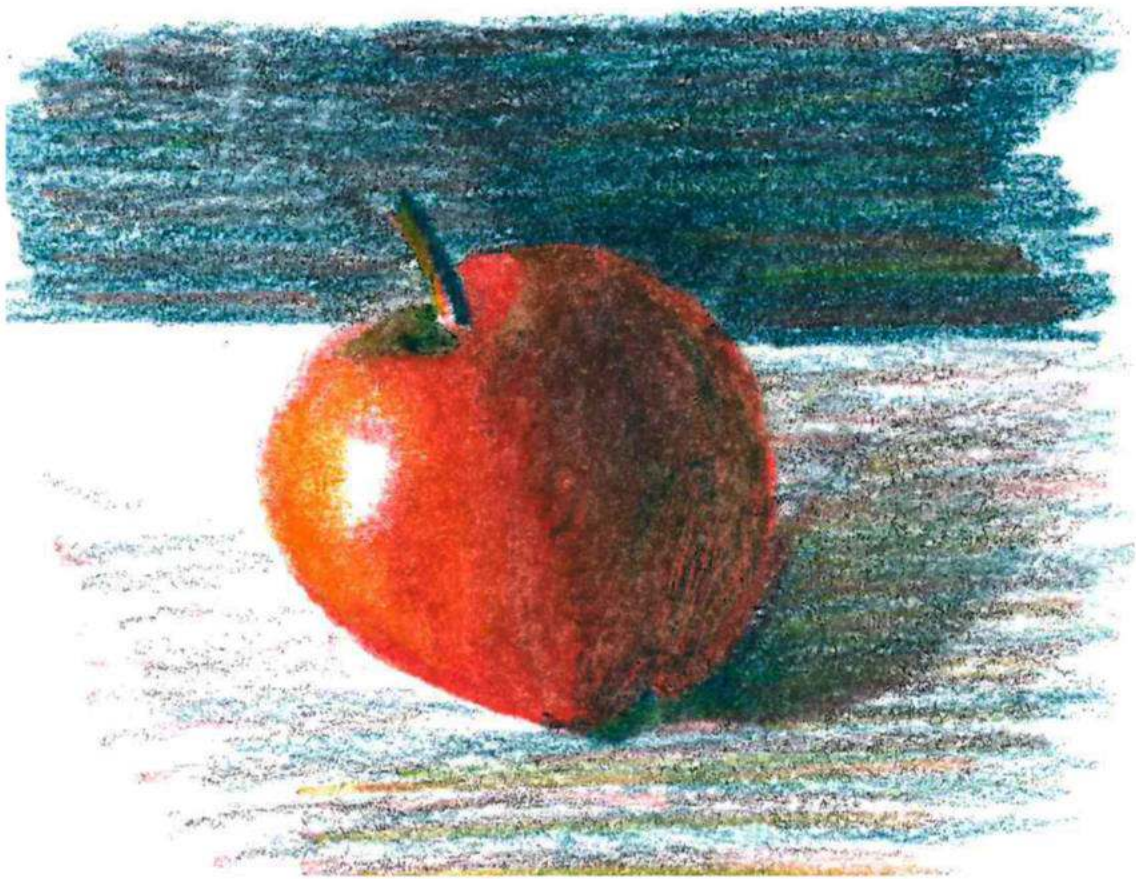
Element of Design: Form

Materials: Pencil, Charcoal Pencil

DAY THREE

⁹ And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.



Reflection Questions for DAY THREE

1. If your spirituality had a color and shape, what would it look like and why?
2. In what ways can you be more generous?

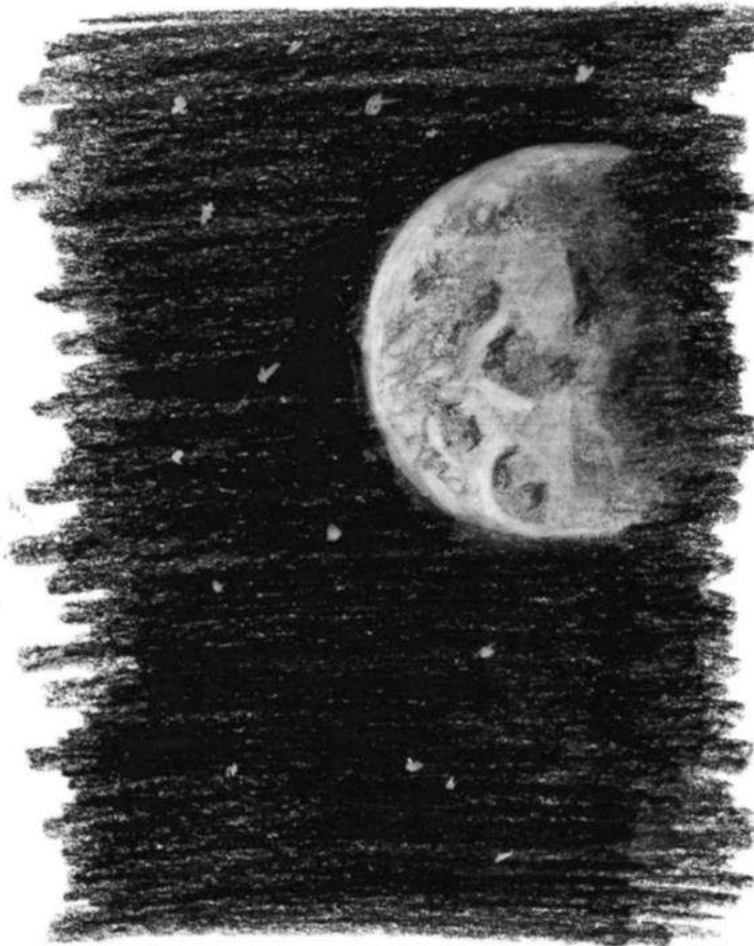
SKETCH THREE

Element of Design: Color

Materials: Pastel or Colored Pencil

DAY FOUR

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.



Reflection Questions for DAY FOUR

1. What is your favorite time and place to pray? What rhythm and movements of the liturgy do you find most life-giving? Why might this be?
2. Recall a time you felt close to Jesus? Take some time to savor the memory of that experience.
3. At this time, how is God inviting you to see more clearly, follow more nearly, and love more dearly?

SKETCH FOUR

Element of Design: Space

Materials: Black Charcoal Pencil & White Charcoal Pencil

DAY FIVE

²⁰ And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.



Reflection Questions for DAY FIVE

1. What are some everyday sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches that bring you joy? How might they be the Spirit's way of leading you to God?
2. What personal practices of gratitude have you created and do regularly? Do you need to make create some?

SKETCH FIVE

Element of Design: Texture

Materials: Your Choice

DAY SIX

²⁴ And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

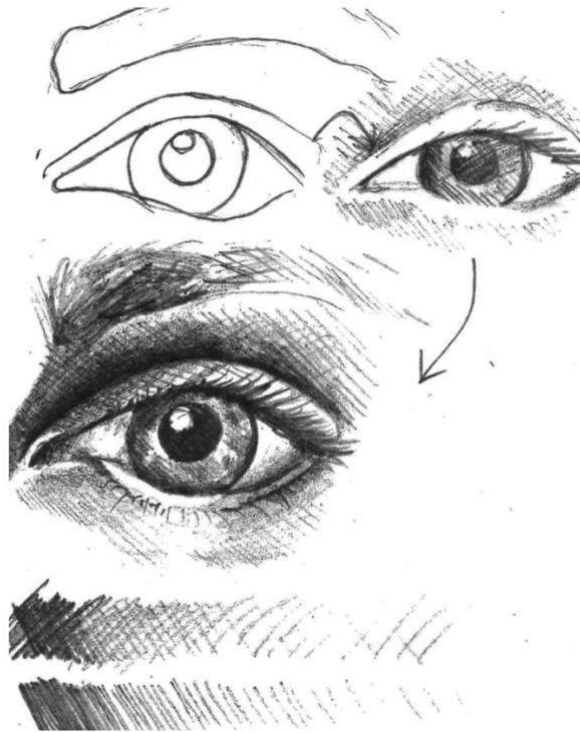
²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.



Reflection Questions for DAY SIX

1. Who are the people in your life that have had the greatest impact on your spiritual life?
2. When you imagine God looking at you, what do you see?
3. What does it feel like to see God looking at you in love? How might you better live out of this love and let it influence the way you serve others?

SKETCH SIX

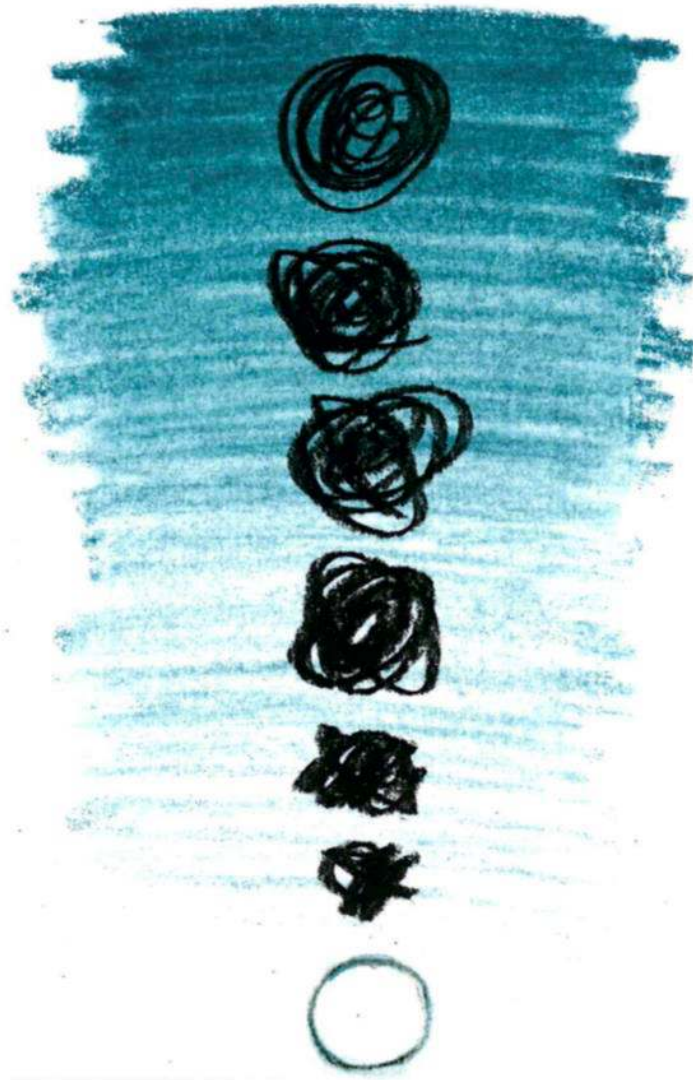
Element of Design: Line

Materials: Pencil

DAY SEVEN

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.



Reflection Questions for DAY SEVEN

1. Imagine your perfect day with God. What does it look like? What are you doing? Engage all your senses. Be aware of your thoughts and feelings.
2. Do you have a 'small' or 'big' God? Does your image of God need to change and grow? How comfortable are you loving the incomprehensibility of God?
3. Do you embrace the mystery of who you and others are?
4. In what ways can you better acknowledge, accept, reverence, celebrate, and serve the mystery of creation?

SKETCH SEVEN

Element of Design: Shape

Materials: Your Choice

Part Two: Explore

1. *Go to your local Museum of Art*
2. *Explore the Galleries*
3. *Self-Reflection/Prompt Responses*
4. *Group Reflection/Sharing*



*Auguste Rodin, "The Hand of God", 1907.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC.*

The Museum Experience: How to Slow Down

How long do you think the typical museumgoer spends in front of a work of art? 15-30 seconds. That's it. Sad face ☹.

You will only have approximately one hour to explore the art museum. To achieve a quality experience, we encourage you to slow down and find a work of art that speaks to you. Explore the galleries for the first twenty to thirty minutes, in search for an artwork that strikes you. Once you find it, stop, and spend quality time with it.

By doing this, you have a better chance of feeling rejuvenated instead of exhausted once your hour expires. After all, when we make a concerted effort to slow down and give time to God, He presents himself in unexpected ways.

The Museum Experience:

Prompts to Ponder

Once you find your “spot” in the museum, use these prompts as fuel for self-reflection. You have the option of journaling, drawing, or reflecting quietly.

Writing Prompts:

- 1. Describe what captured your attention in the art museum. Why have you chosen to spend your time in this particular spot?*
- 2. How has art helped shape your spiritual imagination?*
- 3. What conversation can this artwork spark between you and God?*
- 4. Do you see a connection between creativity and spirituality? How have you felt that connection today?*
- 5. Compose a poem to complement this artwork.*

The Museum Experience:

Prompts to Ponder

Drawing Prompts:

- 1. What element of design does this artwork employ? Try replicating a small portion of the piece using the medium of your choice.*
- 2. How does this piece of artwork translate to your own life? Make a drawing in response to what you see.*
- 3. Draw whatever comes to mind as you sit and experience your surroundings.*
- 4. How would you illustrate your spiritual life? Do so with the inspiration of the artwork around you.*
- 5. Illustrate your retreat experience today in a unique, abstract composition.*

The following pages are blank to provide space for reflection.

