

2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time “Where is God?”

Fr. Frank Schuster

My friends, one of the greatest privileges of being a priest is that I get to meet with many people, listen to their stories, and sometimes have the opportunity to give spiritual advice. I frequently get requests like, “Father, help me find God.”, “I am looking for God in my life, help me find Him.” The “God question” reflects a most intense hunger in the human heart. It is a hunger to be connected to our Creator and to the very reason for our existence, to find meaning in our lives and to find direction. “Father, help me find God.”

On one level, when I am asked this fundamental question, I can’t help but think of the parable of a younger fish swimming up to an older fish asking the question, “I have heard of this thing called water, can you help me find it?” You see, we are all swimming in this ocean of creation which cannot exist without God sustaining it, and so in a real way, God is everywhere. We simply have to develop the eyes to see and the ears to listen. We can go a long way with just using our minds as well. It shouldn’t surprise you that belief in God’s existence is far, far more reasonable to me than the alternative. I get requests sometimes to summarize what I mean by that, so today is your lucky day. Get your pencils ready.

Grossly paraphrasing Aquinas, a universe governed by cause and effect cannot exist without an ultimate cause that isn’t itself caused. This we know to be God. Aquinas called God in this sense the “unmoved mover”. I guess I am interpreting this as the “uncaused cause”. And because creation was consciously willed into being by a self-aware cause, it only make sense that the Creator would be very interested in his creation, probably most especially the conscious and self-aware beings that evolve inside of it. In fact, if you are somehow concerned (as some are) as to how important we are given how big the universe is, it seems more reasonable to me that the universe is exactly as big as God wants it to be. The universe has been created exactly the way God desires it to be, beautiful, expansive and even dangerous, so that our development can happen in a sufficiently free and therefore creative way.

And, if a race of people took a wrong turn during its development, why wouldn’t God be interested in correcting it somehow and guiding it in such a way that respects that same freedom in which we were created? From my perspective, this would explain why God established covenants. And, it would also explain why God would go so far as to even visit us, even redeem us if necessary.

My friends, what God thinks by definition exists and it isn’t possible (again, by definition) for God to forget. Because God does not forget, and what God thinks up by definition exists, there is life after death. Once created, eternal life cannot be avoided. This makes me wonder then if salvation can be boiled down to simply being a good memory in the life of God rather than a bad one. Which again, explains why he sent himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ in the sincerest hope we freely choose to be eternally united to him. It also explains to me why Church, to be Church, must be sacramental, a place where God can physically touch his people. To summarize: the creation we exist in is a soul garden folks and we should take Jesus by his word that there will be a harvest.

I think one of the reasons why I am priest is because, while growing up, I found it very frustrating how little thought other people put into the question of their existence. From my perspective, it was laughably tragic how easy it was for people to live in this world one cup of coffee to the next, chasing after one ridiculous goal after the other, without realizing that our very lives are the result of God's providence. We have come from God. We go back to God. While we live, we have the opportunity to grow in the life of God or not. Everything else is lesser treasure. I simply couldn't understand why anything else could possibly matter more.

To illustrate what I am talking about: have you ever considered that Jesus might have walked by a hundred people the morning he walked by John the Baptist? It was only John, however, who had the eyes to see Jesus and proclaim to his two disciples, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The Gospel says the two disciples heard what John said and followed Jesus. Notice that these two disciple's initial faith in Jesus came from the spiritual advice they received from their mentor, John the Baptist. Little fish asking the big fish, "Show me water". This is similar to the way Samuel came to faith in God through the advice of his spiritual mentor, Eli in our first reading. It is also how evangelization happens. Simon would not have met Jesus unless his brother Andrew invited him.

Once we have had that encounter with the Lord, we get a glimpse into our place in the universe. Life begins to change. "Jesus looked at Simon and said, 'You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas' – which is translated Peter." Encountering God is a life changing event. An encounter with God turned a boy named Samuel into one of Israel's greatest prophets. An encounter with the Lord turned a fisherman into the rock on which the Church is built. An encounter with the Lord turned a Pharisee named Saul into the great apostle Paul. As such, my answer to the request, "Father, show me God", is therefore (surprise) Jesus. News flash: if you want to find the meaning of your existence, seek Jesus. This is because Jesus is the way to the Father and his Holy Spirit is the ocean in which we swim.