

Saturday of Lent Week 1



The major scientists of our time are not materialists. They are observing the universe in terms of its network of relationships, the spaces between things that are themselves energy fields of connection - and as yet unimagined sources of a new understanding of the human, the cosmic and the divine.

Like art, the greatest science is visionary and uses brave new models of reality to explore who and where we are. Everything we know of the world in this way is by metaphor.

The great Aquinas said we can only ever speak of God by analogy. Jesus uses the startling metaphor of a father - 'my father and your father' - expressed in an intimate expression, abba, to indicate relationship with the ultimate mystery 'who dwells in unapproachable light'. We should not be diverted by the gender aspect of the metaphor or by our personal psychological experiences of a father.

Eileen O'Hea once asked the Dalai Lama 'if you could meet Jesus what question would you like to ask him?? He responded immediately with 'what is the nature of the Father??

To understand the liberating and revelatory power of these great images and ideas ? from science and religion and, increasingly today, their combination ? we need mental space. This space is the wiggle room in which we understand the metaphors without being seduced into idolatry of them by taking them literally. To the fundamentalist nothing is more scary than this wiggle room. They often call it 'blinking out the mind so the devil can get in?.

The Christian understanding of this space to wiggle, however, is "poverty of spirit" ? a state of mind and heart in which we are open to the mystery and not clinging to anything we can call our own or have any possessive, emotional attachment to. We don't invade and colonize the land of truth. We wiggle into it. Actually, we are led by the hand into it.

Lent is a time to re-create this space, to throw out the clutter of possessions and idols. Meditation is the discipline that makes this an experience rather than an idea.

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