

30th Sunday 2017

A number of years ago I worked with a young Jesuit deacon who talked about the Boston College Notre Dame football game in his homily. After the Mass I asked him if he really knew anything about football and he admitted he didn't know the goal post was in the end zone or the difference between a touch down and a touch back. So I said to him: Rule number one: Don't preach about what you know nothing about or do not really understand. (Unless you're honest and tell people that you really don't know what you're talking about but...) So today I really don't know what I'm talking about it's captured my imagination this week.

Astronomers announced on Monday that they had seen and heard a pair of dead stars collide, giving them their first glimpse of the violent process by which most of the gold and silver in the universe was created. The collision known as a kilonova, rattled the galaxy in which it happened 130 million light years from here and sent fireworks across the universe. Such explosions, astronomers have long suspected, produced many of the heavier elements like gold, silver and uranium. All the atoms in your wedding band, in the pharaoh's treasures and the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and still threaten us have been formed in cosmic gong show that reverberated across the heavens.

I could go on but wow! Isn't that mind-bending, mind-boggling, amazingly awesome! Aren't you in stunned silence before the mystery of the Universe? And how perfect is this discovery on a Sunday when we hear the passage in scripture where Jesus asks the Pharisees for a coin (gold/silver/copper/ some heavy metal) If what we just heard is true then that coin came from one of those cosmic gong shows millions of years before. The Pharisees are trying to "trap" Jesus or trip him up so that he will show himself in conflict with the Roman regime but with the flip of a coin he evades the question. "Whose image is on this coin? Caesar's. Than Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. But to God what belongs to God. And that's just about everything and everyone. God's image is imprinted on creation

and especially on men and women who bear the “imago dei”, the image of God.

There is something about this cosmic explosion that creates heavy metal for the coin in Jesus hand that invites us to expand our horizons about God who is creator of this mind-bending universe. Like the coin that is so small, and like the critic’s of Jesus who are so small-minded, so often our “images of God” are so small, “domesticated”. We think we can talk about God, describe God, measure God, when we really should be in stunned silence before God.

Listen to a bit more: Neutron stars are full of stuff, matter packed at the density of Mount Everest in a teaspoon. When neutron stars slam together, all kinds of things burst out: gamma rays, X-rays, Radio waves. Something for everyone who has a window on the sky. “Joy for All”, as one scientist says. This is the story of a gold rush in the sky.

Joy for all, here and now, knowing that eternal one whom we name “God” is so much much more that our “small minds can comprehend”. God is the One who at the “flip of a coin” puts into motion these cosmic gong shows that can only elicit from us “awe and wonder”, And yet God is the one whom we call “father/mother”, the eternal one who is so near to us in Jesus Christ.

So for today, don’t be “small-minded”. Don’t focus on the “little things”, the “pettiness” that creates enemies, dissent and division. Try to see the “big picture”, be in awe of the mysteries of the universe that keep unfolding.

One final story: just the other day I was speaking with a new parishioner and at the end of the conversation I asked her what she does for a living. She told me she is a physicist and has been very busy lately, studying and writing about the “waves” that were released from the explosion of two neutron stars. Well I nearly jumped out of my chair! Wow, I said that’s what I’m preaching about this weekend. Can you help me understand?

So, In honor of the God who is the creator of the explosion of the two stars 11 million light years ago, and to whom all belongs, I could ask you do the “wave” or we could just listen to a little bit of “heavy metal” It’s name is buying my way into heaven. (Sammy Hagar/ Unboxed)