

Creation

The Lenten Journey through the Easter Vigil begins where all things begin—with creation. It is virtually impossible for a Christian to even think about creation without giving thanks.

That's what we are doing today (tonight), we are giving thanks for creation. We are giving thanks for life.

That is why we read that rather lengthy narrative from Genesis. The words of Genesis give thanks for the tremendous gift of life that a loving God wanted to share. In many ways it is a creative liturgy that tries to touch as many aspects of creation as the authors could think of, or that their readers could tolerate before losing interest.

One of the greatest mistakes Christians have made regarding the Bible is trying to take this wonderful ode of thanksgiving and trying to make a science book out of it.

It was never intended to be that. We know that because those who wrote the book did not even know science existed. They did not know diddly about geology or astronomy or physics or biology. These are people who thought the earth was flat and that there was some kind of barrier erected up in the sky that separates the waters of heaven from the earth.

I would not expect those writers to be able to tell me any more scientific facts about the origins of the universe and of life on earth than I would trust them to describe the workings of electricity or computers or atomic energy or the engine in my car.

Having been both a biologist and a theologian in my life, it seems obvious to me that creationism does not begin to tell the truth about God nearly as well as evolutionary theory.

Creationism seems stuck on the idea that many years ago, God had this wild flurry of creativity that created the world and all that is in it. And then just as suddenly God lost all interest in creating and hasn't created anything since.

That makes absolutely no sense to me. Creative people love to create. One of the things I am looking forward to doing in retirement is going back to writing. I have projects I can hardly wait to delve into.

I enjoy writing and always have, but it's more that. There have been times when I cannot sleep unless I can get out the creative energy that is in me. I cannot imagine that I could have spent seven days of my life writing something and then deciding I will never write anything again.

If that is true of an insignificant and minimally creative being like me, imagine how true that is of God. God is the ultimate creative force in the universe. God loves to create, to bring life and to bring new life. I don't think God can be without creating.

Creationism says God created once and never felt the urge to create again. Evolution shows how God is creating all the time.

Genesis gives thanks for this creating, sharing nature of God. You do not have to be an expert to give thanks. You don't have to know much of anything. I have known people who never advanced cognitively beyond the level of a 4-year-old who knew more about giving thanks than some self-proclaimed geniuses.

All you need to know is what you have been given and who gave it to you.

The writers of Genesis know that they have been given life and the creation they live in. They know who gave them those precious gifts. And they know how to give thanks for them.

We know infinitely more today about these gifts, the structure of the universe and the intricacies of life than they did. There is no virtue in being ignorant about God's world. They could learn a lot from us.

Like them, we know who gave those precious gifts. We can learn from each other on that.

But when it comes to giving thanks for these precious gifts, I think we can learn a lot from them.

So we read Genesis and learn how to give thanks for the gift of life. That's a good way to start our journey through the Easter vigil.