

Isn't it interesting witnessing the differences between science and faith? The conflict for some between what the Bible says and what evolution says? The first big conflict in my perception was Darwin's theory of evolution. It shook up the Church and most believers. It has percolated ever since, witness the recent controversy at Iowa State between those who believe in intelligent design and those that say it has no place at a university with strong emphasis in scientific fields. At this time most say you can't prove God exists nor that God doesn't exist, at least in a scientific way. So the dilemma between science and faith will probably continue to percolate until some new accepted scientific fact or facts come to the fore. What we all recognize is that religious beliefs and understandings do change and so do scientific facts. As new knowledge becomes available, religious beliefs can change and scientific facts can also. Witness one of my favorite examples of scientific change. 2000 years ago, all the accepted scientific facts said the world was flat. More recently it was a scientific fact that the atom was the smallest particle.

It does seem to me that science isn't all so cut and dried. I believe that there is some science that appears cut and dried and some not so. I call these hard science and soft science. Hard science would be like mathematics. As far as I know, 2 and 2 has always been 4. I have no understanding of the more esoteric mathematical concepts but it seems they haven't changed any prior concepts. On the other hand as an example of what I call soft science we have archeology. Part of it seems hard science, bones, coins, tools and weapons that can be carbon dated. How the people who left these artifacts lived and interacted seems like soft science. I read an article in "Biblical Archeology" written by a person with impressive credentials. The following month there is a letter to the editor written by a person with impressive credentials contradicting partially or substantially the statements of the article's author. Or, you have two philosophers, one who says that a glass is half full, the other says, it is half empty. Or as my engineer son tells me, the real answer is that the glass is bigger than it needs to be.

I even have some questions about evolution. I do believe in evolution, that dinosaurs changed from small creatures into massive creatures, that some land creatures became sea creatures and vice versa and look at the wide variation of the human specie.

A physics professor recently told me that there has been no record of evolution between specie. In other words frogs do not evolve out of scorpions. Seems reasonable to me. The last I heard there is no scientific proof that mankind evolved out of some ape or other primate. I believe it is called the missing link. Experts studying different creatures are amazed when they find primates using sticks as tools and seals using rocks. How does that compare with how the human specie has developed? To the best of my knowledge no other specie over hundreds of thousands or even millions of years has developed like the human specie. There seems to be something significantly different here. Could it be that what is missing is something we call faith? Is there something about faith that makes us different?

Today's lessons are about faith. The Lord came to Abram with a promise for the future that seemed impossible, yet Abram believed. The Lord reassured him that his reward would be very

great. Theological authorities say that reward used here is in the sense of grace to those who trust in God and not as payment for services rendered. Abram had faith. God does not demand or make new promises. Abram simply believes. This simple act provides an understanding of faith as hope born out of the barrenness of the past.

In the letter to Hebrews it says “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”. This reading is about faith. Faith is a commitment to a reality we cannot prove. It is not science. We do know from experience. We enter an educational system not knowing where it will take us. Most of us marry not knowing where that will take us. Some have families not knowing where that will take us. I don't know about you, but none of this was very scientific for me. We just seem to have faith that it will work out. Is part of that faith that keeps us going a belief in a loving, forgiving unscientific God? Or is God the ultimate scientist who can create something out of nothing. A faith that gives us unscientific hope that something better is always ahead? I have heard people ask why God created such an imperfect world, with all its pain and suffering. It has never made sense to me that God would create heaven on earth. God already had heaven why bother. He gave us an imperfect world that offered challenges. We know that exercising is good for us even though at times it is unpleasant. We also know that we frequently feel much better after brisk exercise. So it may be with imperfect world challenges.

Many times it is unpleasant or even worse. When we overcome bad experiences we grow as a person, we become a better person. Our faith is frequently what gets us through tough situations and strengthens us for the future.

Prior to today's Gospel reading Jesus tells the parable of the rich man who tore down his barns and built new bigger ones. Ones to store his grain and goods. Then he could relax and enjoy the comfort and pleasure of his physical possession. And then he died. As many of you know, I provided two Sunday Services to Nursing Homes/assisted living facilities for 16 years. I saw people come and go, many in terminal situations. In those 16 years, I don't remember anyone talking about their barn or goods, they were talking about relationships.

In today's Gospel Jesus talks about faith. A faith that offers freedom from the fear and anxiety of our daily lives and how we can go on with hope for what is important in life.

Lets give science and faith their due, understanding they are different in fundamental ways. Faith is not scientific but it is hard to believe it is without important value. It is what lets us experience, love, compassion, forgiveness and true happiness. Feed that faith with love compassion forgiveness and commitment.