

Sunday, February 28, 2016

This Same God Is Our God

3rd Sunday of Lent

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/022816-third-sunday-lent.cfm>

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Luke 13:1-9

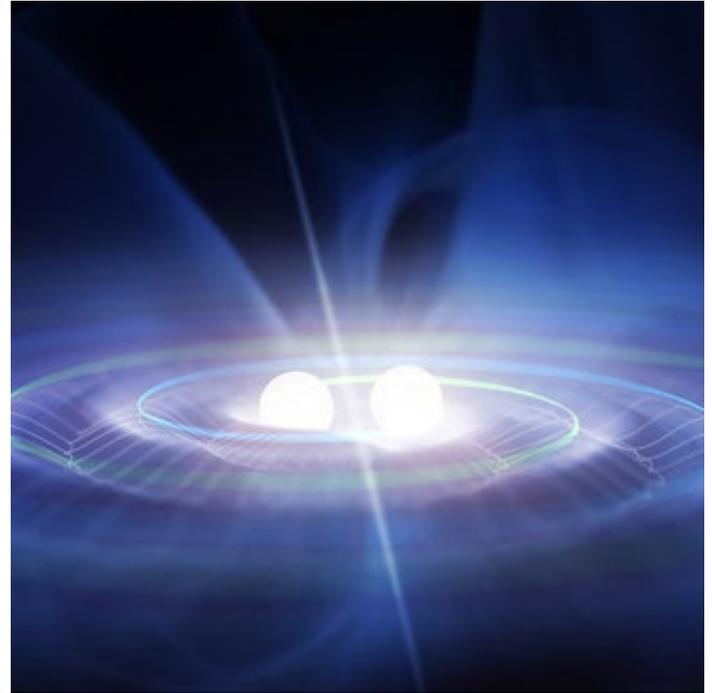
Recently, the scientific community was shaken by the news that a theory of Einstein, made almost a hundred years ago, was verified. Through the use of an ultra-sensitive telescope, [Dr. Nergis Mavalvala](#) and her team at MIT, proved that there has been a ripple in space-time. This phenomenon was produced by gravitational waves resulting from the collision of two black holes about 1.3 billion years ago.

It sounds like science fiction, but it isn't. How amazing! The news media caught the excitement. We also caught it! Our universe is astoundingly huge and so very old! Our small minds can barely grasp it! Yet, it's true. It's real! Awe results!

That awe migrates to an awe of the Source of creation. Our God created this universe, which may be only one of many. Our God existed even before 1.3 billion years ago when there was nothing. Who is this God? What is this God? Mystery piles upon mystery!

Moses is tending sheep in the wilderness. He is nothing ... doesn't even tend his own flock, but the flock of his father-in-law. Suddenly he sees something. What is it? A bush that is burning but not burning! How can this be? Curiosity draws him nearer. In the movie, [The Ten Commandments](#), this scene is tame. The bush shimmers. Scripture says it burned. Fire! It's hot! It's dangerous! Fire spreads and eats everything in its path. But this fire is different. It flames, but doesn't consume. Moses doesn't understand. But then a voice calls him by name. "Moses! Moses!" And he responds to this theophany, "Here I am."

God identifies himself as a God of Moses' family, the God of his ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These are names familiar to Moses. He hides his face in the presence of this God. He is given a commission. This God has heard his people's cry. He will rescue them through Moses. He stands there, probably unable to take in all of this. Coming to his senses, he asks for the name of this God of his ancestors. A name describes the essence of a person—who one is, what one is—one's mission. God names his essence. "I am who am." "Tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you."



The great “I AM” who always was and always will be! The great “I AM” who created universes with gravitational waves rippling through them as black holes collided. The great “I AM” who exists in no time, before time was. This was the God of Moses. This same God is our God.

As time moved on from Moses, this God stepped into our small world to show us the covenant relationship he wishes to have with us. Jesus, the promised Messiah, came. Jesus lived like us, among us. Jesus taught us, so we could grow closer to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and also Moses. Jesus came to bring the kingdom of that God to our earth, our tiny planet.

He taught in stories, knowing that we humans love to hear them. Some stories were meant to teach us hard lessons. In today’s parable, we are all like the fig tree. We are here to bear fruit through our lives. Bear fruit or perish, the parable says! The warning is severe. But then, enter the gardener, an image of Jesus himself. He tends us. He works our soil that we may grow. He feeds us, again, that we may grow and bear fruit. He gives us time to change our ways. This is the point Jesus emphasizes. We must repent and change our ways.

What is it in my life that is keeping me from bearing fruit? Have my roots shriveled up? Do they reach deeply into God, the soil of my life? Have I turned away from the sun, the true Son, and been caught up in darkness? What is the darkness in my life? Have I hardened myself so as not to receive the nourishing grace God offers?

It is still early in Lent. If I haven’t begun, can I and will I start now? With God being the great “I AM,” there is no time. Can I say, like Moses, “Here I am”? Can I take my shoes off in the presence of God who is everywhere? And can I trust that, like the gardener, God will work with me and give me all that I need to produce fruit?

Now! Now! It is the acceptable time!

Pat DeGroot, ObISB

NOTICES

NATIONAL CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES COLLECTION

Many dioceses will take up the annual Catholic Relief Services Collection on the weekend of March 6, 2016. Parish resources for this important Lenten offering are available on the USCCB website at:

<http://usccb.org/catholic-giving/opportunities-for-giving/catholic-relief-services-collection/collection/index.cfm>.

LENTEN RESOURCES FOR PARISHES AND INDIVIDUALS

The USCCB offers special resources for Lent on its website at:

<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/lent/index.cfm>.

From there you can download the Pope Francis' Lenten message in this Year of Mercy and the US Bishops' pastoral letter on the sacrament of penance, "God's Gift of Forgiveness," as well as other great resources.

In addition to its other resources for Lent, the USCCB is offering "40 Days of Mercy," an online calendar for the season of Lent with daily activities and meditations. You will want to share this information with parish members, school and religious education staffs, and other interested parties. The online calendar can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/lent/lent-calendar.cfm>.

LENT AND CRS RICE BOWL

Catholic Relief Services is again offering its successful Lenten action program, CRS Rice Bowl, to parishes. The resources are available at www.CRSricebowl.org. Bulletin resources for CRS Rice Bowl are also available on the LPi Art & Media Portal at www.Portal.4LPi.com; search keyword "[Rice Bowl](#)".

PRAYER

God of faithfulness and expectation.

Bless these children of yours who seek to follow your ways.

Help them to see that your Son, Jesus the Christ,

came to live among us in the flesh,

as he struggled, like we do, with human weakness.

Give them strength as they fight against the forces of evil and selfishness,

so that they live for you and your church.

Give us the strength to journey with them

as they walk towards the baptismal font at the next Easter Vigil.

We ask all this in the name of God the Father,

God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

—Prayer for Catechumens, © LPi.

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