

Your Rector's Letter

More than a month ago the entire nation was moved by the passing of Professor Stephen Hawking. His ashes are to be buried in Westminster Abbey, near the grave of Sir Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin. Newton was buried in the Abbey in 1727 and Darwin beside him in 1882. Of course, Hawking's burial in the Abbey won't turn him into a believer in God. Stephen Hawking made it clear that for his analysis and theory of the universe he didn't need the existence of God. The gaps in scientific paradigms are better kept open until a decent explanation is found rather than trying to fill these gaps with God as the solution. Hawking did not oppose faith in God, he just thought that the inclusion of a God could not contribute to scientific analysis.

Nevertheless, it is interesting what he says about non-scientific aspects of life. He values them as essential for life, and often higher than scientific scrutiny. About music for example he said this: "Even if we found a complete theory of the universe, it wouldn't remove the need for music."

The same can be said about other kinds of art and why not about faith. As a complete theory of the universe does not make music superfluous, likewise science does not eliminate faith.

In Eastertide we celebrate the God of life, of our lives, your life. We trust that God's love and presence carries on beyond death. Hawking didn't need God in science, but I am quite sure that he would agree that we don't need scientific evidence in faith. We trust, we hope, we believe and that is situated in a sphere that differs from science that only wants to observe, measure and explain.

We are people of hope, with a deep trust in the God of life. We don't have proof, but the signs are all around us. We just need to see them. The gospel is such a sign. A critical reading of the resurrection story in the gospels, illustrates that the account of what happened on that first Easter morning is described genuinely and truthfully. The resurrection story does not hide the disciples' unbelief, and their struggle to get to grips with the dazzling presence of their risen Lord. They are hesitant, clumsy, say and do the wrong things,... In fact it takes a few women, the first witnesses of the resurrection, to fire them on and of course the disciples then go mad when they encounter the risen Jesus. These meetings with Jesus are full of anticipation, hope and joy.

As a disciple of Christ I trust that you may feel like a person of hope, in love with your Lord, embracing him and welcoming him as the living God in your life. And with Jesus - who once was dead and is now alive - because of Easter, you embrace all your loved ones whom you long to see again, and the people you don't know but have heard of on the news: those dying in Syria, in Congo, in Yemen, and all places of violence or famine or illness. No one lives unnoticed, and no one dies unnoticed in God's eyes. That's the statement that the Father wanted to make at Easter by raising his Son. You are so precious in his eyes that you will never be lost, neither in life nor in death. He will always be with you and he will bring us all together. He is our hope, our joy, our love.

Sincere Eastertide blessings!

Erwin