

I used to play a Game with my students in the classroom: *give the answer and guess the question*. It was a useful and helpful way in finding different ways to solve mathematical problems; how to take a fresh look at a text you've been reading or studying; or how to name the parts of a plant. The title of today's homily, 'I believe in One God' is not just a personal statement but, I believe, the answer to the ultimate question in the universe: Why is there something and not nothing? Why does anything at all exist? Scientists in the 1930s finally caught up with the teaching of the book of Genesis, and acknowledged that the universe had a beginning, and there was a 'time' when there was no universe to speak of. I hope that for you and I, however the universe came into existence, and why it came into existence, and why we are here on planet earth, with a Romford post code ... the answer is, 'I believe in One God'. We may have many lesser questions to ask about the world in which we live, but the very fact that there is something, points to a sufficient reason for all our individual existences.

The media are trying hard to airbrush out the spiritual dimension of life, and a religious outlook on the world. However, God hasn't lost his appeal. In the 2001 census - the first one where people were asked to declare their religious beliefs - over 85% of the adults in the UK declared a belief in God. Many were Christian, committed or nominal; many were Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh. Many others could not perhaps voice their reasons for belief, not having been brought up in a religious culture, and yet - and yet - something draws them to faith in One God, something other than themselves which is accountable for this remarkable existence which we call the universe.

For many such people it is the beauty and order of the universe that persuades them of God's existence. As we can now gaze into deep space, seeing but only a fraction of what actually exists, we can see the formation and ending of whole planetary solar systems and galaxies, shaped in defined order. The famous Fibonacci Sequence of numbers can be identified in the shape of galaxies on a cosmic scale, but also in commonplace encounters such as the arrangement of sunflower seeds as the heads seek the sun; the leaves in a pine cone, and the infamous nautilus shell. The Psalmist said that, 'The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork' (Ps19), and we humans have a natural instinct for beauty and order; we are attracted to it because we are instinctively part of it. Have you ever watched a child stare at a leaf or a flower, just lost in wonder, and yet completely at home in God's garden.

The phrase 'I believe' isn't simply an intellectual idea, however. It is relational. It could also mean 'I trust in one God'. In our Christian context such a statement is always in relation to the one who is the perfect unity of the human and divine: Jesus, through whom all things were made (Jn 1). 'I believe' is a recognition and admission that we do not rely on ourselves for our own existence and meaning, but on something - or someone - with whom our lives are entwined. In our baptism we proclaim that 'I believe in God, creator of heaven and earth ...'. In baptism we 'put on Christ' - we are cloaked in both his divine goodness and human perfection. In our Christian lives we are absolved in his

name, in this Holy Communion we receive his body, blood, soul, and divinity at the altar, and are strengthened for his service in Confirmation.

In a few moments we shall stand and proclaim our faith, not in an abstract, absent, and unconcerned deity, but in the context of the divine Trinity. We do so because we acknowledge that in Christ - in the context of the Holy Spirit - God has come so close to us as to take upon himself our mortal and human nature. We shall explore this more next weekend.

To declare 'I believe' is counter cultural. In our current context, when it is popular to make our own decisions and form our own consciences, to place our lives, our families, our standards and values in God is to voluntarily lose our autonomy, and hand it over to the one who knows us best. We no longer have to give in to the pressure of our peers, or the widespread lie that 'you can be anything you want if you want it enough'. In placing our trust in God is to allow God to be God; and for us humans to become truly human.

When we contemplate the lives of Our Lady and St Joseph, we see two humans who have trusted in God, and that trust was pushed to its very limit. May they watch over us, with the love and care they gave to Jesus in his own life.