

# Creating the world of God

My good friend, Jim Haas – historian, writer, musician, religious educator, etc. – offered a great quote to me. He said: “To think that the universe came to be by chance (that order comes from chaos) is comparable to believing that we could throw all the parts of a Lexus up into the air, and they would land as a fully assembled automobile.”

Since my great nephew, Michael, is a master mechanic – whose specialty is the Lexus – that quote has special meaning for me.

Where does the universe come from? One of the first principles of metaphysics is that something doesn’t come from nothing. Can we have design without a designer? Could we come upon a Lexus and believe that it just happened, that no one made it?

To carry the analogy even farther, if someone gave us a Lexus, would we not express our gratitude? Whom do we thank for this entire universe?

Good religion begins with a sense of awe and gratitude. The word Eucharist, the word for our Mass, means “to give thanks.” We thank God for the gift of creation. We thank God, in Jesus, who entered history. We thank the Holy Spirit who lives with us and in us, and will bring history to its fulfillment.

Good religion, then, gathers us as a grateful people. Recent surveys, however, indicate that more and more people are not identifying themselves with organized religion. I can certainly understand the struggle. Since institutions are comprised of people, we humans, in our weakness, can distort the very ideals we preach.

On the other hand, it is easier to reject religion than to replace it. At its best, organized religion is organized goodness. While it is easy to focus on the failings of people in the church, it’s so easy to miss all the good – the schools, the hospitals, the soup kitchens, the world-wide charities, and on and on. We could list page after page of ministries that help people day to day, person to person. They wouldn’t exist without the power of organization.

Perhaps at its best, religion is organized “Godness.” The church reminds us that we

share the very nature of God. We become co-creators of the world with God. It is true, as St. Paul reminded us, that we carry this divine treasure in earthenware jars. We remain conscious of human weakness.

But we also remain conscious of the power of God living in us and working through us. Without organized religion we easily lose the ability to celebrate who we are. Without being reminded daily, or at least weekly, of our true identity as people of God, it is easy to forget, to be less than we might be.

We don't live in a morally neutral universe. If we are not hearing the voice of God that lifts us up, we too easily can listen to the voice of the ego, or the voice in our minds, or the voice of the world, the ones that keep us limited to time and space, to selfishness and self-centeredness. There is a voice that goes counter to Christ-centeredness.

At the end of each day, if we have brought creativity and love and caring and peace and joy to where we live and work, then the world is a bit more the world of God. We need a place where we can thank God for creating us. We need a place where we can feed on God's word and presence, and continue to create a better world.

The world mostly tells us who we are not. God tells us who we are, that we are sharers in the very life and consciousness of Christ.