

I believe in God

By Father Joseph Breighner

Did you know that you have a hundred trillion bacteria living on or inside of you? That's the conclusion of Human Genome Project - a study by 200 scientists at 80 institutions. I read about the report in the June 14 issue of the New York Times.

The article by Gina Kolata began: "For years bacteria have had a bad name. They are the causes of infections and diseases. They are something to be scrubbed away, things to be avoided."

But this study indicates that 'good' bacteria are: "are essential for human life, needed to digest food, to synthesize certain vitamins, to form a barricade against disease-causing bacteria."

And here's the part that most astounded me: "They discovered more strains than they had ever imagined - as many as a thousand bacterial strains on each person. And each person's collection of microbes, the microbiome, was different from the next person's."

Most of us have been taught since childhood how unique each individual is. Now science is proving it in ways we could not previously have measured. As astounding as the universe is around us, there is an equally astounding universe within us!

Why am I sharing this now? Well, one reason is to teach us to 'have mercy' on the medical doctors in our lives. We now know why various medications work so very differently on different people. We are different in a trillion ways.

On a more profound level, this new research adds to the question of how free any of us really is. We like the Fourth of July. We celebrate our independence. We like being free. But are we really free?

Science has long taught us that we are influenced by nature and nurture. In other words, we are influenced by the genes within us, as well as by the family and society

around us. You and I, for example, were taught by our faith that the way to heaven is love. Someone else may have learned that the way to heaven is through blowing themselves up, and, perhaps, blowing you and me up as well.

And look at the styles of clothes people wear. Would we dare to dress differently than our advertising and fashion industries dictate? Look at how we are conditioned by our media and entertainment and sports industries. Now we know that there are 100 trillion microbes inside us influencing us.

In this short article, I want to offer two humble conclusions. Appreciating how we are all conditioned to “see” life differently teaches me enormous compassion for others whose behavior offends me. Would I be any different if I had their biology and conditioning?

On the other hand, I still believe in the power to be other than what we are conditioned to be. I know people who were abused, who do not become abusers. I know people raised in wretched situations who have become loving people. I know people who love who would have every “reason” to hate.

In other words, I believe in a power within us and around us greater than every other power and influence. Put simply, I believe in God! I believe in a God of power and love who gives us the power to so love ourselves that we transform ourselves, and to so love others that we transform our world. Even 100 trillion bacteria can’t resist the power of love. And all we really have to do is to surrender to that Love. We just have to let go and let God.

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