

# Distant Stars, Close God

Homily by Fr. Jonathon A. Schmeckel, Archdiocese of Milwaukee

*For the Mass of the Easter Vigil*

On this most sacred night, as we celebrate the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord, we are filled with joy because we know that God has profoundly entered into the world, into our lives, and into our hearts. As we have listened to the many readings in the radiance of this Easter candle in the darkened church, we hear the many, many ways that God has worked throughout in the lives of his chosen people. We hear the story of creation. We hear how God acted decisively to bring his people out of slavery in Egypt into the chosen land. In these recent days, we have heard the story of Jesus' Death on the Cross. And, tonight, we hear that he has conquered death by rising from the dead. God has decisively entered into creation and into our lives. Even more, God has not randomly and chaotically entered into our lives, but in an intentional and ordered way.

When we look at all of God's wonderful creation, we see that He has continued to work intentionally and specifically in all of the created world. Recently, I had the opportunity to travel with a group of seminarians to the Vatican Observatory – which does astronomical research outside of Tucson, Arizona. And during our pilgrimage, we met a scientist who taught us about the cosmos outside of our own solar system. I learned two things from her. Through incredibly powerful telescopes, we have been able to see *far, far* away from the few planets in our own solar system. We can see massive amounts of stars, planets, and other things.

First, I learned that all of this – all that is happening far beyond our eyes – has a systematic order. The world "out there" is not purely chaos. There is a God who has intentionally planned out the entire cosmos. Second, I learned that the cosmos is enormous. The world beyond us is larger than we can ever imagine. But, what does this have to do with our celebration of Easter on this most holy night?

As we look at the immensity and the ordering of the world beyond us, we realize that same God has moved into our world. The same God has conquered death in the Resurrection. The same God who created each star, each planet, and each mountain also knows our name. God the Creator is not a distant, cold God. God who created all of these things also knows your name.

To those of you who will be baptized and confirmed tonight, God has called you here tonight. Having heard many of your stories of how you came to this night, it is clear that it is God who brought you down these many paths that leads you to encounter Him in Baptism and in his Holy Church. As we draw closer to the Risen Christ in the brilliance of this most holy night, let us enter with the joy and amazement of the women and the disciples at the sight of the empty tomb of Jesus.

In the midst of all the darkness and chaos of the world outside, the light of our Paschal Candle, the light of Christ himself gives us hope and joy and peace. Those of you will be baptized make that light real and encourage the rest of us to follow Christ, to love Christ, and to trust Christ. No matter what is going on in your life, *turn to the Risen Christ!* The God who has created every single star in the sky at night is the same

God who was died on the Cross and rose from the dead out of love for you and for me.

That God knows your name and loves you and calls you to follow Him.