

‘In the beginning . . . ‘ The short phrase that begins today’s gospel reading, written by St. John, the apostle and evangelist, is one of the best known phrases in the Bible. These three words bring us into the opening of John’s profound account of the life of Jesus, and they also echo the phrase that opens nearly every translation of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis. They are familiar words, comforting words, words full of mystery and wonder, and they are words that leave us longing for more. These three words beg us to ask questions, to imagine, to expand our horizons and open our minds to explore the possibilities to come. ‘In the beginning . . . ‘

John continues, ‘In the beginning was the Word . . . ‘ What follows is a concise and elegant summary of the Genesis creation story, which then carries the reader into the times and events of John’s gospel.

‘In the beginning . . . ‘ For millennia, humans have wondered about the beginning, searched for answers, and created stories to explain the origins of all they saw and experienced. There are probably thousands of creation stories, most with similar themes. It’s safe to say that many open with a similar phrase, and leave the listener longing for more.

In modern times, scientists, astronomers, thinkers and dreamers been able to answer many of the questions about the beginning of creation, of the universe. Those answers offer some satisfaction, but most of them lead to more questions, a desire to search and know more. How did creation begin? Where did it begin? Why? What did it look like? Feel like? Sound like? We now know the universe began not with a bang, but with a very low frequency hum undetectable by human ears, an ancient hum that with the proper equipment can still be heard over the ever-increasing human-created cacophony of everyday life on earth.

‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ And I believe the Word that was in the beginning, the word we still hear echoing throughout the far reaches of the universe, even today on the First Sunday of Christmas in 2023 - that Word is Love. ‘In the beginning was Love, and Love was with God, and Love was God.’ The Word is Love. It always has been and always will be Love.

‘In the beginning . . . ‘

Thanks be to God!