

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Oct 21st 2017

Today's readings speak of the importance of having faith. Faith requires believing without proof, which can be very difficult for me as a scientist. When I teach, I back my lessons up with facts. When I research, I am required to provide clear evidence in support of my position and openly acknowledge the limitations of my argument. Not surprisingly, being grounded in this scientific tradition often makes my faith in God difficult to articulate, because I cannot provide outright proof, despite my belief and personal experience of God.

I recently watched a scientific documentary called Particle Fever (available on Netflix) about the physics community's work to prove the existence of the Higgs boson, which has been called the "God particle." Physicists presumed this particle existed for 40 years without proof. They based their Standard Model upon its existence although they had never directly observed it. They assumed the particle existed, because without it, the rest of the Standard Model fell apart. In short, physicists had "faith" in its existence.

Thinking about this has been very freeing to me. The physicists had faith in the existence of the Higgs boson, because without it, the rest of their explanation of how the world works failed. These reasons for faith in the absence of proof are key philosophical arguments for belief in existence of God – we have faith in God because without God we cannot explain our own existence, or how the universe made order out of chaos, or how to understand morality.

Perhaps your faith is more like Abraham's than mine. I admit I struggle with articulating my faith in the absence of absolute proof, but if scientists can build on faith so can I. I cannot prove the existence of God, but I do see evidence of God every day in the people and world around me. I see God as the order in the chaos. I feel God's presence in my heart. So I have faith and I believe. I pray the Holy Spirit will continue to strengthen these gifts in me.

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