

## Sermon – Living with Questions

A great many Christian women and men expect priests, preachers and pastors to provide answers to the pressing “why” questions of life. This is understandable. Behind it lies a sincere desire to make sense of one’s own life story, of the destinies of others, and of the history of the world. We ask: Why is this happening to me?

Is it God’s will?

What is the meaning of it all?

Why is one person wealthy while another lives in poverty?

Why does one live peacefully into old age while another dies young – sometimes even in childhood?

These questions are not signs of weak faith. On the contrary, they often arise from a faith that is deep, from a faith that takes both life and God seriously.

Church leaders face these questions – and not infrequently succumb to the temptation to provide answers without being certain that they truly know what they are saying. As if we were God’s press officers. As if the Bible were a vending machine for answers: insert a question, press a button, and out comes a neat explanation.

But this is not how it works.

We are not God’s press officers.

And the Bible is not an automatic answer machine.

When we turn to Scripture, we discover something striking: the Bible is full of questions. Job asks them. The psalmists ask them. The prophets ask them. The disciples ask them. And even Jesus himself asks them. Faith, in the biblical sense, is not born of clear explanations, but of trust in the midst of uncertainty.

What if Christian faith – a faith that trusts, loves and hopes – is precisely what awakens in us the courage to live with questions?

What if faith does not provide answers, but points us in a direction, showing us how to move forward?

What if it does not enable us to understand everything, but teaches us how to live with what we do not understand?

Life is a mystery, because it is a gift from a mysterious God. Faith is not an attempt to solve this mystery, but a journey on which we gradually learn to live with it. The point is not to diminish the mystery, but to allow ourselves to be embraced by it.

Faith means growing into the mystery that is not somewhere outside us. I myself am part of it. We are surrounded by it, immersed in it. We do not live alongside the mystery; we live within it.

As Herbert Frank, the author of the remarkable science-fiction saga *Dune*, once wrote: **“The mystery of life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced.”**

Here we touch upon something profoundly important: God is not there to solve everything for us. God is not a magician who removes pain, uncertainty and fear. God is the one who is with us – in order to share everything with us, to live it through alongside us.

God's compassion and solidarity with creation, into which God has breathed life, are infinite – without limits and without measure. Scripture tells us that God knows each star by name, every star ignited by the spark of the divine Spirit. And there are trillions more stars than there are people. How, then, could the Father of the universe not know each one of us by name? Every human being. Every story. Every wound.

God knows us – and carries our burden upon God's own shoulders. This is what the way of the cross of God's Son, Jesus Christ, bears witness to. God does not pass by human suffering. God enters into it. Shares it. Bears it.

The story of Jesus does not provide answers to everything either. But it profoundly transforms our relationship with reality. It teaches us to receive reality in a Jesus-shaped way.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus would often go out early in the morning to pray in deserted places. What are these deserted places if not human hearts – hearts dried out, exhausted by the endless search for ever more answers? Hearts that no longer know what to do with what they are living through.

And what does Jesus bring into these places, if not a light that does not explain, but liberates? A free space for questions of which we no longer need to be afraid. A space in which we may say, "I do not know," and yet remain in relationship – with God, and with one another.

Perhaps this is one of the greatest gifts of faith: that we do not need answers in order to keep going. That we do not need to understand everything in order to trust. And that God remains present even then – and perhaps especially then – when God is silent.

Amen.