

Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington was an early 20th Century British Astrophysicist whose studies included the Philosophy of Science as well as the popularization of science.

He was born in 1882, and died in 1944.

He is best known for his English-language works that announced and explained Einstein's Theory of Relativity; as well as his expedition in 1919 to observe the solar eclipse ... which was one of the first confirmations of relativity.

Another one of his observations regarding the world around us was that "*matter is mostly ghostly empty space.*" Scientists have gone on to show that what we take for solid is quite probably 99.99 ... and then some more 9's ... empty space.

In researching a concise explanation of this, the best one I found on the internet was that we should think of matter like a big chain link fence. And while it may be mostly empty space, we are still held back. And that is supposedly why all this emptiness feels so substantial

Without going any further into the physics or mathematics of this phenomenon, I suppose we must just take it for granted that what we see ... or touch ... or feel ... isn't necessarily what we've got.

In today's first reading from Ecclesiastes, we hear the statement of Qoheleth that "*Vanity of vanities ... vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!*" And for those of you into home improvement, he's not talking about bathroom cabinets.

Yet, we are betrayed by the evolution of language ... since the Hebrew word rendered here as "*vanity*" means "*vapor.*" And indeed, one of the original meanings of the English word "*vanity*" dating back to the 13th or 14th century is "*emptiness.*"

Although, "*Emptiness of emptiness! All things are emptiness!*" doesn't quite have the same poetic ring to it ... it might be a more appropriate Modern English translation of the original Hebrew.

And in the Gospel, we hear the "Parable of the Rich Fool." The entirety of which is a monologue of the Rich Fool with himself ... which sounds pathetically narcissistic ... "*I ... I ... my ... I ... I ... my ... I ... my ... I ... myself ...*" and the only time he says "*you*" is when he's talking to himself.

He is a fool, because all of his effort will be lost with one swipe of God's pen ... when he dies ... and, if we might paraphrase God's voice in the Gospel ... or even the middle-part of the reading from Ecclesiastes ... "You can't take it with you."

So, what's a middle-class, consumer-driven, 21st century, American, mid-westerner supposed to do? After all, many if not most of us drove here in our cars, from our homes that we have been filling with stuff for quite a few years.

The solution is to recognize who we are. Saint Paul says it quite well in the Second Reading from Colossians when he tells us:

*you have died,
and your life is hidden with Christ in God*

In other words, our Baptism has transformed our relationship to the world and to God. And the challenge here is to actually live as if we believe this.

Saint Paul also gives us good advice on how we are to do this when he says:

*seek what is above ... [and]
[t]hink of what is above ...
[so that we] will appear with [Christ] in glory.*

The bottom-line here is that Saint Paul admonishes his listeners ... and us as well to:

Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly

An older translation of this uses the word "*mortify*" which is just a fancier way to say "*put to death*"

And if all this sounds a bit too violent or gory an analogy ... perhaps we might find a more peaceful direction in Saint Paul's final admonition to:

*put on the new self,
which is being renewed, for knowledge
in the image of its creator ...
[of] Christ [Who] is all and in all.*

In other words, we should be setting aside ... or mortifying ... or putting to death ... whatever gets in the way of our renewing of our relationship to Christ ... and realizing that if everything else is "*emptiness*" ... then our fullness ... our "*all in all*" ... can and will only be realized in the Person of Jesus Christ.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray for the grace of discernment ... to lay aside whatever stands between us and a deeper realization of our true life in Christ. And may the graces of the Eucharist ... which we will receive at this Mass ... strengthen us in our relationship to Our Savior ... Christ Jesus ... who is our "*all in all.*"