**The Church and Science**

*Faith and science*: "Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth” [*Dei Filius*, no. 4]. "Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are” [*Gaudium et spes*, no. 36].

– *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 159

Very commonly, people believe that the Catholic Church is opposed to science. On the contrary, as the passage from the Catechism illustrates, it is God who gave us the light of reason and the gift of faith, and so faith and reason can never contradict one another; if this were so, it would mean God was contradicting Himself. As Dr. Peter Kreeft writes:

There is one God who is the source of all truth, whether that truth is known by faith or reason; and God never contradicts himself. God is like a teacher who wrote two books and teaches from them: natural reason and supernatural revelation. There are no contradictions between the two books because they both come from the same author (Peter Kreeft, *Catholic Christianity: A Complete Catechism of Catholic Beliefs based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001, p. 26).

God created our minds and He desires that we use them to investigate and understand the world He has created. Dr. Kreeft goes on to say: “When there seems to be [a contradiction between faith and science]…it always turns out to be no real contradiction at all. One or both have been misunderstood” (ibid, p. 26).

The important role of believing Catholics (including many priests) in the history of scientific advancement show that faith and science support one another. Here are a few prominent figures:

* Blessed Nicolaus Steno (1638 – 1686): born in Denmark, Steno was a pioneer in the areas of anatomy and geology. Initially a Lutheran, he converted to Catholicism in 1667, and was later ordained a priest and bishop. Steno is perhaps best known for his contributions to our understanding of the layers of sedimentation on the surface of the earth. He was beatified by Pope Saint John Paul II in 1988 (Niels Hansen, "Nicolaus Steno," The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 14. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. 14 Jan. 2015 http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14286a.htm).
* Louis Pasteur (1822 – 1895): best known for his work in bacteriology and the origin, structure, and spread of disease in both humans and animals. Pasteur loved the Rosary and was said to be a man of great piety. We have a beautiful account of his death: “He died with his rosary in his hand, after listening to the life of St. Vincent de Paul which he had asked to have read to him, because he thought that his work like that of St. Vincent would do much to save suffering children” (James Joseph Walsh, "Louis Pasteur,." The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 11, New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911, 14 Jan. 2015 http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11536a.htm).
* Gregor Mendel (1822 – 1884): an Augustinian friar who laid the groundwork for modern genetics with his work with pea pod plants in the monastery gardens. His work was virtually unknown in his lifetime and it was only after his death that he was recognized for his great achievement (Matthew Bunson, "Fathers of Science,” *Catholic Answers*, web, 14 Jan. 2015).
* Georges Lemaitre (1894 – 1966): a priest and physicist from Belgium, Fr. Lemaitre first proposed what has now come to be known as the “Big Bang Theory” (interestingly, this was not his name for the theory; it was derisively given this name by some who thought the theory outlandish). In our day, some form of this theory is accepted by nearly every physicist (ibid)