

Can Scientists also be Disciples?

COMPLEMENTARITY OF SCIENCE/FAITH

What does a lowly garden vegetable have to do with Pope Benedict's letter in this year of faith celebrated around the world? Well, it actually has Catholic "roots" in the experiments in genetics which a Catholic Monk, Gregor Mendel researched more than a century ago. This monk, a respected botanist in his day, served God through God's creation with his experiments on the "lowly bean." Other Catholic scientists, past and present, have achieved success in botany, biology, anatomy, chemistry, physics, and others, while at the same time remaining faithful disciples of Jesus. Do we recognize the names of some of those scientists? (John Polkinghorne, Fr. Stanley Jaki, OSB (d. 2010), Guy Consolmagno SJ.) Georges Lemaitre (d. 1966), a priest, was the first to propose the Big Bang theory – not the TV sit-com, but the theory of the early development of the universe.

Where are the scientists and technologists in our parishes today? Do we even know who they are? Do they readily identify themselves as scientists to their pastors or do they refrain from speaking because of the oft-heard response from others, "Oh, you're a scientist? I don't know anything about science?" followed by the unspoken, "And I don't want to know either..."

Evangelization occurs not only through "bringing in the sheep" -- those from outside-- but of evangelizing those who are already within the body of the worshipping community. This month let us turn our prayers and concerted efforts to show scientists and tech-nologists within our parishes that we appreciate them. Scientists can make unique and valuable contributions in building the Body of Christ. The Vatican II document, *Gaudium et spes* 36 explains "For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts. Therefore if methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it never truly conflicts with faith, for earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God." If we know a scientist or technologist in our parish we can show them we value their work. As we speak with them maybe we can ask them how their practice of science brings them closer to God.

Who knows? Perhaps there is another Gregor Mendel working on another "lowly bean" in our midst.

Q.Are scientists and those who work in technology (the geeks?) important to the life of the church today? Give examples: (examples: scientists working in labs around the world who are researching adult stem cells – Technologists who are devising better means of communication)

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