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Faith, Science, and the Blessings of Finitude

By Dr. Sebastian Mahfood, OP

The relationship between faith and science takes an interesting turn in an era where New Atheists like Richard Dawkins seem to be gaining ground in their fight against faith-based thinking. It may be important to remember that there was a time when Christian faith was not an issue in philosophy and science. Philosophers like Aristotle and scientists like Archimedes seemed to get along fine without it, each respectively reaching the apex of achievement in their fields.

The scholastic age of Christianity that followed the pagan era included thinkers like Boethius and St. Thomas who realized that the truths of philosophy were best understood in the context of their revealed faith. Since the scholastic period, the trend has been away from pursuing the relationship between faith and reason, between faith and science. It is important for institutes like ITEST to restore a general understanding of that relationship to its proper place among humankind.

The question posed by the atheists on whether our reliance on God somehow diminishes our understanding of our own value as human persons and our own capacity for intellectual acuity is really a non-question. We already know we are temporally finite because our bodies die over time, and we already know we are limited as evidenced by a myriad of factors, not the least of which involves failing memories and various incapacities in our ability to understand the fullness of the disciplines that lie remote from our own.

It actually increases our understanding of our own value as human persons to know that an infinite being, a necessary being, cared enough for finite, contingent beings such as us that He brought us into being in the first place and has reserved for us an eternal destiny in joyful communion with Him if that is our choice. It actually increases our understanding of our intellectual acuity if we know that the light of our understanding has a source beyond our own limited intellects toward which we can strive.

If we know that an eternal, perfect being created us and has a plan for our salvation, then the most reasonable thing to do is to rely on that being to provide us with the grace to achieve it. For this reason, we individual substances of a rational nature must cultivate an understanding of the relationship between ourselves and our Creator. Those of us who are not Pelagians have to ask ourselves the very simple question—what good is the exercise of our Reason if it is insufficient by itself to save us?

The short answer is that Faith and Reason cooperate with one another in our understanding who we are – our identity – which is most perfectly revealed by Christ Himself who fully reveals mankind to himself. They are the two wings about which Christ spoke to St. Catherine as recorded by St. Raymond of Capua when He said, “You have two feet to walk and two wings to fly.” With both these wings in flight, we are buoyed up by God’s love.

Even so, we yet hit a limitation. As strong as we are created in the image and likeness of God whose natural law is written on our hearts, we need supernatural grace to perfect our natural gifts, and God provides it through the Holy Spirit who works within us. For us to gain by it, though, we have to consciously participate in the activity of God, in pursuing what Pope John Paul II called in section 41 of *Veritatis Splendor* a participated theonomy, since, in his words, “man’s free obedience to God’s law effectively

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Announcements



CONFERENCE ON

An Open Forum on Issues Raised by Scientific, Ethical and Theological Concepts of Early Human Life

CO-SPONSORED BY THE INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL ENCOUNTER WITH SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (ITEST) AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT, SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

**To be held October 12-14, 2012
at Saint Louis University, St. Louis Missouri**

There are few topics today that supersede the dire need for a meeting of science and theology than early life issues. These issues include the very meaning of human life, when it starts and when it becomes sacred. In vitro fertilization, cloning, stem cell, especially embryonic stem cell research and other topics are peak concerns for theologians and human ethicists and are at the cutting edge of science. Scientists and theologians may approach these early life issues from different perspectives but an attempt to find common ground could benefit both sides.

**Science without religion is lame,
religion without science is blind.
— EINSTEIN**

The intent of this symposium is to bring scientists, ethicists and theologians to a common table where they can discuss their views and hopefully reach some concordance, even if that means agreeing to disagree.

The conference will include invited keynote talks from specialists in these areas and is open to submission of abstracts as space allows. The conference presentations will be published as a peer-reviewed book.



SAINT LOUIS
UNIVERSITY

For more information visit www.earlylifeissues2012.com.

We are in the process of setting up an ITEST PayPal Business Account primarily for those who register for the ITEST/St Louis University collaborative conference, “a forum on early life issues.” However, it could also serve those who wish to pay yearly membership dues with a credit card using the PayPal secure site.



Institute For Theological Encounter with Science and Technology
Cardinal Rigali Center • 20 Archbishop May Drive • Suite 3400-A • St. Louis, Missouri 63119 • USA
314.792.7220 • www.ITEST-faithscience.org • E-mail: mariannepost@archstl.org

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Faith, Science, and the Blessings of Finitude

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implies that human reason and human will participate in God's wisdom and providence." We are lost otherwise and fall into wrath and rebellion.

In his *Paradiso*, Dante Alighieri makes explicit that there are things in the mind of God that the created being cannot know – our hope lies in our salvation, but God's mind is deeper than we can plumb. Dante writes in Canto XIX,

In the eternal justice, . . . The understanding granted to mankind is lost as the eye is within the sea: it can make out the bottom near the shore but not on the main deep; and still it is there, though at a depth your eye cannot explore (lines 58-63).

John Ciardi, a translator of Dante's *Comedy*, explains in a footnote that "man must be content with the guidance of Scripture and with the sure knowledge that God is perfect, good, and just." Dante wants an explanation, though – what is the nature of God's justice? – and he is told by the eagle he meets in the sixth sphere that the nature of God's justice is inscrutable because the creating Word exceeds its creation infinitely. This is because God knows things as their cause, and we only know things in their effects. We cannot, therefore,

know the fullness of God's plan for salvation, and because no created thing can plumb the depths of its creator's mind, we cannot guess. Here, we hit our ultimate limitation.

We are not entirely bereft of understanding, though. We do know one thing, and it is a formula intimated by Peter Damian, who manifests himself among the contemplatives in the 7th sphere of Paradise, among others – even though the power of God's love has reasons too deep for any created being to plumb, *our eternal destinies in joyful communion with God enable us to forever contemplate those depths*. Because we never get to the bottom of them, we will forever grow spiritually, never hitting our souls against a cap. Our finitude is not at all bleak when looked at in that light, for it holds out the promise of infinite growth in an infinite Being.

This understanding puts a new gloss on the relationship between faith and reason, between our faith and our science. We are at our best when we pursue our activities in full participation with the God Who created us with the capacity to do so, Who created us as creatures for our own sake, and Who takes delight in us when we pursue our desire to understand the nature of created things with full awareness that there is a Creator Whose mind has put all those things together.

“He said... then I said: Conversations with a Skeptic”

by Carla Mae Streeter, OP

It's not new, yet it is new. Church bashing and Catholic criticism is having a rebound, yet the context of today that causes this resurgence is new. The new context is quantum physics. The new context is all that the Hubble has shown us. It does no good to simply say, "I'm a person of faith... end of discussion." Our challenge today is to re-think, re-conceptualize, and communicate with others from the perspective of faith and calmly explain why this makes sense. As educated Catholics we need first to claim our rich and vibrant identity, our *catholicity* if you will, and I urgently suggest we put aside the term "catholicism," relegating it to the pejorative company of "communism, pietism, racism, sexism, etc."

We need to dialogue with those who have settled for a materialistic naturalism as their worldview. We have a deeply rich incarnational worldview, and we need to find words to talk about it. The old familiar theological terminology we have been so comfortable with in-house has been rejected as no longer meaningful by our agnostic and atheistic conversation partners. Yes, perhaps

they are rejecting what they have never understood, but conversation needs to begin with where our partners are, not where we would like them to be. We need to know where they are to bridge with them into the truths we are convinced hold a more holistic perspective about reality.

Who are these new dialogue partners challenging us into this intellectual debate? I will briefly introduce some of them, offer a sketch of their focus, and then attempt to begin the dialogue. I will leave it up to you who are reading this to carry on the conversation, for the challenge faces all of us.

Sam Harris

Meet Sam Harris. Sam published *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* in 2004. He has taught at Stanford in California. Pointing to Islam in particular, he is convinced that religion fosters the worst atrocities. The solution, Sam is convinced, is that religion must go. It needs to be replaced by modern physics and reason. In 2006 Sam published *Letter to a Christian Nation*. Here his attack targeted Christianity in particular.

Sam speaks much truth. He also, in my view, reaches a very simplistic solution, as if the solution to having a black sheep in the family is to wipe out the family. So in my first attempts to respond to Sam in a group of intelligent Catholics, I said...

Sam, you are right about the atrocities visited upon us in the name of religion. They cannot be justified...from the inquisition down to suicide bombers. But, Sam, you are not right about the solution: to wipe out all faith, all religion, and substitute physics and reason for them in our lives.

Let me explain. First, the kind of faith you want to destroy is a fundamentalist, absolutist dogmatism, that listens to no one, and that is closed to the views of others. It might surprise you to hear that on the danger of this I agree with you. For what you want to destroy is an egotistic bias disguised as religious faith. It gives a bad rap to all sincere believers who do not identify with it. Sam, have you ever really talked to real theologians about this? I suspect you haven't or the distinction would have appeared in your book, no?

Further, you are right about the importance of physics and reason. Again, I urge you to talk with physicists and intellectuals who are deep people of faith, not fundamentalists. You might be surprised to learn that they share your love of physics and reason, and that they bring this scientific and intellectual rigor to their faith and theological exploration. Physics and reason are

Physics and reason are not opposed to faith, Sam. They just know their limits.

not opposed to faith, Sam. They just know their limits. Faith opens up the human mind to the unknown. It might surprise you to know that scientists operate 98% of the time on faith...natural faith. They follow hunches, then set about verifying them. Sam, do you *know* there is only 10% ethanol in your last gas fill up, or do you *believe* it because the gas tank label tells you? Do you *know* your doctor's diagnosis is correct, or do you *believe* him because you trust his credibility?

Religious faith is an openness to possibility the mind does not yet grasp, regarding the holy. In your all too general solution, you would toss this out? Come now, Sam...is

that reasonable?

As for Christians, who are you reading and talking to? How about talking with mainline Christians who agree with you on the unacceptability of the fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity? How about a fair consideration of what Christianity has brought to culture? Are you a bit biased in your sources, Sam? Is that competent research that we should respect?

Daniel Dennett

Next, let's meet Daniel Dennett. Daniel wrote *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* in 2006. He works out of Tufts University. For Daniel religion is a "spell" that must be broken. Religions evolve "naturally" and must be pruned by reason. I considered the truth in what Daniel writes, and so in response I said...

Daniel, your book picks up the "spooky" element of a fundamentalist approach to religion and faith. You are spot on as to its natural development, springing from our human capacity for wonder, and the danger of superstition. Yet I wonder if you too have ever talked with a mainline theologian on the development of the religious sense. Superstition is one thing, authentic religious experience and its discernment is another. I bring this up because your simplistic labeling signals to me that you have come down in your judgment without doing your homework adequately. I happen to agree with you that superstition fills us with fear, and cripples us. At the same time, from my experience, true religion has nothing to do with superstition. True religion can be known by the joy it fosters, not by a crippling fear it imposes on religious people. Let's talk more, Daniel.

Richard Dawkins

Richard is famous for his book, *The God Delusion*, published in 2006. A British science writer and evolutionary biologist, Richard is convinced that religious faith is blind, that it is alien to reason, and thus worthy of no respect. By November of 2007, his book sold 1.5 million copies in 31 languages. Pondering his perspective with others, I said...

Richard, you have been reading rigid fundamentalists, and I side with you on the blind dogmatism, the rigid absolutism, and the lack of respect for pietism without critical thought. But your text shows little or no evidence

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that you have entered into discussion with solid mainline theologians. This makes your beginning assumptions inadequate. Until you talk with respectable rigorous theologians, your conclusion will remain faulty, because

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you have not opened yourself to a fuller picture.

Faith is in no way “blind.” It sees all too clearly that our human minds, reasoning from sense data, do not have all the data regarding reality. There is much more than we can grasp, measure, and name. We don’t even know what light energy is, if we are honest...it is both a particle and a wave...so we haven’t quite figured it out. At the present we have no idea what dark energy is. And most importantly, we really do not know what the great Mystery of the universe (God) is. Not knowing fully, in science or faith, is no reason to dismiss, as you well know. If you did that scientifically you would be highly criticized by your colleagues. So perhaps we need a little humility in dealing with a kind of reality that defies our current measurements. Because we cannot get in touch with this reality with our senses doesn’t mean it isn’t real. It just means it is beyond our sensible grasp right now. So is your mother’s love, the heroism of people who give their lives for others, and the mystery of a kid from East St. Louis winning an Olympic medal. It just doesn’t add up...so we think. To our way of thinking it doesn’t “make sense.” But there is something else at work, and it is very *real* as is evident by amazing news stories, and the lived experience of those who know better. So, Richard...we need to keep talking.

Christopher Hitchens

Christopher wrote his *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* in 2007. He is a very angry man, and his writing is vitriolic. In a tirade of words he ignores religious distinctions, labeling them all as ridiculous and evil. For Hitchens, the more liberal forms of religion are merely disguised forms of humanism. Unfortunately his book is filled with historical errors and exaggerations. So, pondering this, I said...

Christopher, I suspect you’ve been badly abused by some

religious person. Anger usually points to something like this...but I might be wrong. Regardless, venting as you do in your book creates more heat than light...and what we need is light. Yes, horrific things have been done in the name of one religion or another...yes, some religions do very foolish things, and we are all too quick to write off as foolish what we don’t understand, yes? Who have you been talking to, Christopher? Anyone? Are all religious people dumb? Are they all evil? Foolish? As a responsible public author, I suggest you need to do your homework better so you are not just written off as biased. You are pointing out the abusive side of religion, and we all need to listen up about this. This is not a minor issue. Religion is supposed to help people, so you have much to tell us, but not the *way* you do it. I personally am very sorry you are so angry. I’m sorry too for whatever made you so angry, but I’m not going to sit here and let you get away with blacklisting us all because you have not looked into what you are writing about. You are venting. So maybe now, since your death, you understand a bit more?

John Allen Paulos

John wrote *Irreligion: A Mathematician Explains Why the Arguments for God Just Don’t Add Up* in 2008. He uses his mathematic perspective to conclude that God does not exist. In pondering this approach I said...

John, I would never claim that mathematics would reveal God’s existence. But knowing precious little about math, I would ask rather who or what is behind the beauty of numbers. Is it all chance? Where does the order come from? The symmetry? What about the beauty? Give me your mathematical answer to these things. If you have no mathematical answer, then at least give me credit for seeking the answer beyond math, perhaps. Let’s not just reduce everything down to what we can wrap our minds around. There just might be things that will surprise us, OK? We need to talk more, John...have you talked with any theologians who are open and rigorous, and not fundamentalist? Let’s go for coffee...

Bart Erhman

Bart is a former Christian. In 2008 he wrote *God’s Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question-Why We Suffer*. Bart is a professor of New Testament at the University of North Carolina who has lost his faith. He is one among many who are scandalized by the problem of suffering which destroys

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faith in a loving God. In thinking about this, I said...

Bart, you've voiced in print what haunts many of us. Where we differ is where we each have gone with the questioning. As I understand, you have decided to become an atheist because from your study you don't think God gives an adequate answer to the problem of suffering. It doesn't make sense to you. I have the same question as you do, yet I end up in another place.

I think of the parents I know. If they were given two options regarding their children: first, that their children would never have to suffer – but would end up quite self-opinionated and egocentric; or, their children would suffer, and could learn compassion from it, I wonder what they

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would choose. I think I know what God chose. The bible does not present a manipulative God to me. Instead I find God working with our nonsense, always trying to bring good out of it. But never do I find us treated like puppets.

We choose, God responds. So my conclusion has to be that God really trusts the freedom that we have, even if we use it to destroy ourselves. No shot-gun weddings. For me, the cross is the amazing revelation that even when I do my worst, the Mystery will be there ready to pull me out of it. So, because it still is incomprehensible to me, I can only trust that the Mystery sees the whole picture. It comes down to God being God and me just being little ol' me. So I put my faith in that greatness, not in my lack of making sense of it. I hope you keep talking with those who love you, Bart.

Final Thoughts

As we continue to read the literature of the new atheists, agnostics, and skeptics, we do ourselves no service seeing them as enemies. They are fellow human beings who are seeking answers to deep questions. If we are honest, we too are pilgrims seeking truth. The true is the real as known by the human mind. The real is the real, whether we know it or not. Perhaps we can be humble enough to know that all of us continue to move into the future, the fullness of truth, the greatest of Mysteries. Hopefully this will give us the patience and compassion to keep listening and talking. Who knows, we may eventually, hand in hand, talk ourselves into the fullness of Truth. I suspect we are *all* in for surprises.

“No Catholic Church, No Scientific Method”

by Scott Locklin

Scott Locklin, a former physicist with the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, now works on quantitative finance problems in Berkeley, California.

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The argument that the Church has a role to play in the continuing evolution of scientific endeavor is no doubt confusing to many people, believers and nonbelievers alike. In modern times it has become fashionable to think of the Catholic Church as somehow antithetical to science. The idea is virtually universal among nonbelievers, among whom I, alas, count myself. I suspect the idea has

become more common among Catholics as well. There is no reason it should be: The scientific project, even the scientific method itself, is an invention of the Catholic Church.

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What we refer to today as “science” is something invented by man. There is a definite date before which there was no science, and a date after which there was science. This isn't controversial or mysterious: We know exactly when it happened. In fact, some of the original manuscripts

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that helped codify science and modern scientific thought still exist. For some reason, Many today like to think of Galileo as the first scientist. Though he was indeed a great scientist, he was by no means the first; he was simply the first to have political difficulties as a result of his discoveries. Oddly, nobody gives Galileo credit for being a devout Catholic (see “*the Galileo Legend*” by Thomas Lessl, *NOR*, June 2000).

Science was invented in the high Middle Ages, a peculiar era of high prosperity and human achievement in Europe and other parts of the world. It was a time of knights, a time when Europeans reached their true potential as civilized people. The great European universities were founded during this happy ear: Bologna, Coimbra, Paris, Oxford, Salamanca, Cambridge, Montpellier, Padua. The very idea of the university was invented during this period, and it came straight from Catholic monasticism. Musical notation was invented. Windmills, eyeglasses, printing, improved clocks—all were invented around this time, and other inventions, like paper, the spinning wheel, and the magnetic compass, were introduced from abroad by the great commercial city-states.

We have visual evidence of the glory and prosperity of this time in Europe in the form of the Gothic cathedrals. One can look at these magnificent churches as the physical crystallization of the same heroic spirit that produced the scientific method, in the same sense that one can look at the Parthenon of Pericles as the physical crystallization of the spirit of Plato and the Greek philosophers.

One of the most well-deserving candidates for the title of “first scientist” was Robert Grosseteste (b. ca. 1170), widely credited as the founder of the English intellectual tradition. Grosseteste was the first European in centuries to study the works of Aristotle, and the first to study the writing of the Arab natural philosopher, Abu Ibn al-Haythan. From these ancient thinkers Grosseteste developed the idea of “composition and resolution,” essentially the foundation of the scientific method. He also advocated the use of mathematics to learn about reality, developed the idea that one could learn general principles of natural law by studying specific examples, and introduced the important concept of falsification—to separate true from false precepts in the scientific process.

Grosseteste was also the bishop of Lincoln. A deeply pious man, he spent much effort making sure the common people had proper moral instruction in their native tongue

of Middle English. At one point in his ecclesiastical career, he fired all of the clergymen under his authority who led immoral lives.

Although we have inherited from nineteenth-century Romantic poets the image of the medieval scientist as a sort of deranged Promethean character bent on upsetting the natural order, Grosseteste was practically saint-like in his moral probity. Perhaps this helps explain why we don’t hear more about the early scientists. They subvert the prevailing pop-culture paradigm of what a scientist is supposed to be. They were clerics who oftentimes served as moral examples to others. They did not cut the antinomian figure of modern pop-culture crypto-scientists like Richard Dawkins. They were extremely pious figures; their practice of science was a form of prayer or religious devotion, not a way of rebelling against the constraints of

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their societies. Science was invented to give glory to God by examining His natural laws, not to overthrow Him or erase Him from existence.

The Franciscan friar and English philosopher Roger bacon was the great systematizer of Grosseteste’s work. He put science in the form we recognize today. He used words that have become part of our scientific lexicon: *observation, hypothesis, experimentation, and independent verification*. He also detailed many of the ways in which people can fall into error—by resorts to authority, custom, cultural opinion, or pretentious blather. Bacon’s contributions to human knowledge were many, and he’s the one medieval scholastic you’re likely never to have heard of.

Another important early scientist of the era is St. Albertus Magnus (Albert the Great). St. Albertus, one of only thirty-three doctors of the Church, was a Dominican bishop and most notably taught Thomas Aquinas. He wrote treatises on mineralogy, botany, physiology, metallurgy, zoology, and a whole host of other topics. Albert’s intellectual achievements are so numerous and wide-ranging that he might be considered the first “Renaissance man.” Few thinkers in human history contributed more to the development of modern thought than Albertus Magnus.

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Yet only a few moderns have heard of him.

Other figures from the era include Petrus peregrines, a crusader and monk-knight who wrote detailed and influential accounts of his experimentation with magnets. Witelo of Silesia developed perspective optics, which eventually led to the beauties of Western painting. Johannes de Scartobosco made important contributions to mathematics and astronomy that we take for granted today. William of Ockham—of “Ockham’s razor” fame—made important contributions to logic and physics.

All of these men were deeply pious clerics. Neither ignorant mystics nor anti-Church rebels, they were the

most learned men of their era. They were not provincial rubes from the backwaters, as modern pop culture portrays religious people today. Modern atheists with little sense of history like to think of the Church and religious people as the forces of darkness; in reality the Catholic Church was the birth of the light of reason. Those religious people are the ultimate heroes of reason; without them, science would not have come into being. While many today would have it otherwise whether from ignorance or personal anti-Catholic animus, the fact remains: Science and the scientific method is a Catholic invention, not a secular-humanist one.

The Work of a Lay Ecclesial Minister in the 21st Century

by Barbra Sturbaum, PhD

After having worked at the college/university level for almost 35 years primarily as a teacher of biology, from freshmen biology to advanced pathophysiology, I resigned in 1993 to accept the appointment as Resident Pastoral Minister, now Lay Ecclesial Minister, of two small parishes in rural Mississippi, St. Therese in Kosciusko and Sacred Heart in Louisville. Both parishes have been without resident priests for more than 25 years. The decision to leave teaching and the university setting was not easy because I loved working with students, doing research, associating with colleagues finding comfort with the familiar. However, for many years I had thought about doing something more directly for the Lord, so after a long period of prayer and discernment, I finally had the courage to apply for the position of Resident Pastoral Minister, to venture into the unknown and accept the appointment when it was offered. On the whole, the change has been very good, and it has been life changing.

The Lay Ecclesial Minister (LEM) is a non-ordained man or woman appointed by the bishop to administer to the pastoral care and needs of the people within a parish or mission. This person is answerable to the bishop and is responsible for the day-to-day ministry and operation of the parish or mission. The LEM is assisted by a Priest Sacramental Minister who provides for the sacramental needs of the community. When the Sacramental Minister cannot be present for a Sunday Mass and there is no substitute priest available, the community gathers for a

service called Sunday Service in the Absence of a Priest (SCAP) and the preside is the lay ecclesial minister or a trained, designated Eucharistic Minister.

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Barbara S. Sturbaum, PhD

Brief Biography

Barbara S. Sturbaum, PhD earned her doctoral degree in Zoology at the University of New Mexico in 1972 with a concentration in Environmental Physiology. Prior to her work in zoology, she served as a research technician at Western Reserve University, going on to pursue her Master of Science degree at Marquette University from 1959-1961. She complemented her studies in science with studies in spiritual direction at St. Thomas University, North Miami, Florida and completed her Masters of Theology studies at Spring Hill College, Jackson Mississippi. Since 1993 Dr. Sturbaum has held the position of Lay Ecclesial Minister at two parishes in Mississippi, Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Louisville, MS and St. Therese Catholic Church in Kosciusko, MS respectively. She has been a long-time, loyal member of ITEST.

Dr. Sturbaum is an example of the true scientist whom Fr. Bob Brungs often spoke about; one who loves science and devotedly lives the faith, finding no conflict between the two. Ad multos annos, Barbara, may you continue serving God as a believing scientist and lay Ecclesial Minister in the Church.

Catholics in Mississippi represent only 2 percent of the population; whereas in the Louisville and Kosciusko areas, Catholics represent less than 1 percent of the

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population. Each of these communities has a population of about 7000 and St. Therese is the only Catholic Church in Attala county and Sacred Heart in Winston county. Kosciusko is just off the Natchez Trace Parkway in central Mississippi and is approximately the center of the State. Louisville is in East Central Mississippi and is 36.5 miles from Kosciusko. Because of the distance between the two parishes, it is not feasible to combine programs. Currently, St. Therese has 70 Catholic households with a registered Catholic population of 189. Of that number, 107 are Hispanic, 78 White, 1 Black and 3 Asian. Sacred Heart has 33 households with a registered Catholic population of 72. Of that number, 52 are White and 20 are Hispanic.

Most of the White people in both parishes are middle class with a few below the poverty level but most of the Hispanics are poor. There may be only 30 people at Mass at Sacred Heart on Saturday evening and 35 at the Mass in English and 45 or 50 at the Mass in Spanish at St. Therese on Sunday but these numbers represent 40 to 50 percent of the Catholic population of each parish which is better than reported attendance at most Catholic churches in the United States.

The annual income for each parish is less than \$50,000. Because of the low income and the small number of parishioners, neither parish can support their own LEM, provide for the parish programs and pay the sacramental minister for his services. I am the only paid staff for the two parishes. As a result, in addition to the work of the LEM, I do the other jobs that need to be done at the parishes such as the day-to-day secretarial and finance work, my share of cleaning of the church and other small maintenance tasks.

St. Therese and Sacred Heart are viable and vibrant parishes with parishioners participating in the liturgies and other activities. Each of these parishes have the same programs— CCD, RCIA, the RENEW program, Why Catholic?, finance and pastoral councils, adult education, Bible study and others —as larger parishes but on a much smaller scale. The pastoral councils help with the writing of the annual

State of the Parish and the finance councils help prepare the annual budget besides the other financial matters. Parish volunteers share the teaching of CCD and RCIA, facilitate the program, Why Catholic? and help with other duties, such as cleaning the church and hall.

At Sacred Heart, the Why Catholic? program has been very successful. Through the four years, about 12 people participated in each session which represents 17 percent of the parishioners. For the past ten years at St. Therese, we have had a service in Spanish on Sundays. When there isn't a priest available for Mass, we have SCAP which I lead. We also have RCIA in Spanish. A number of adults in the Hispanic community have not made their First Communion and/or have not been confirmed so the RCIA has been geared toward them. Until this year I have prepared them for the sacraments but because I am not fluent in Spanish, they received only the basic training. The Hispanic children are quite fluent in English so we have only one CCD program at each parish and this is in English.

There are events throughout the year that bring the Hispanic and Anglo communities together for a bilingual liturgy followed by a social. These functions include, among others, the celebration of our patroness, St. Therese, the Thanksgiving celebration with the neighboring Episcopal Church, the annual after Christmas Bingo and food party and receptions honoring First Communion and other sacraments.

For ten years I have been ministering at the Regional Correctional Facility in Louisville. There are only a few Catholics at this facility but occasionally some non-Catholics come to the services. Throughout the years we have had three converts and this year one man made his First Communion and he and one other were confirmed.

Both Sacred Heart and St. Therese reach out to the community at large to help the poor and disadvantaged.

Both Sacred Heart and St. Therese reach out to the community at large to help the poor and disadvantaged. Each month St. Therese donates to an ecumenical organization called Helping Hands and also helps a few individuals who come to the door. Sacred Heart has a food certificate program and assistance with utility bills, medication and occasionally

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with the cost of temporary lodging. These programs are in addition to what we do for our own needy parishioners.

As with every job, there are good and not so good parts. One of the not-so-good aspects is the lack of time. There is simply not enough time to do all that needs to be done and still have time for days off; yet for me the good outweighs the not-so-good. The interactions with parishioners at many of the programs mentioned above rate very high in my estimation. Among the programs is teaching basic theology courses in the Diocesan Certification Program for Lay Ecclesial Ministers and Pastoral ministers to the parishioners at Sacred Heart and St. Therese to prepare them as potential candidates for becoming LEMs or PMs in the future. Four individuals at St. Therese and two at Sacred Heart have accepted the call to be ready to lead.

Being here in rural Mississippi, I have learned a lot about myself: my strengths and weaknesses, the good and the not-so-good, through interactions with the people of the parish,

the diocese and the community and through prayer and the examen. I have learned that when I put myself aside and let the Holy Spirit work, things go more smoothly. I have accepted tasks I shunned in the past, such as secretarial and finance work. I even play the piano or organ at the Liturgies when the musicians can't be present. Further, I have learned that I can work alone and do what is required and more, but I also have learned that I am not self-sufficient and I need an ongoing prayer life with the Lord whom I depend on more and more each day.

In the diocese of Jackson, when a Lay Ecclesial Minister reaches the age of 75, he or she must turn in a letter of resignation. I complied last May tendering my resignation to the bishop of the diocese. However, I have not yet received an answer from the bishop, so I am continuing to do what I have done for more than 18 years just a little while longer. Where I will go and what I will do when I leave here, has yet to be revealed.

Global Warming Skepticism

by Patrick J. Hannan (*Naval Research Laboratory, retired*)

Being told emphatically that "all scientists agree about global warming" evokes outright wrath, because there are thousands of scientists who reject this rallying cry. I concede that the world temperature has risen, and I know for certain that the CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere has increased. But to insist that the CO₂ concentration has caused the temperature to rise this amount is to potentially confuse a correlation with cause and effect.

CO₂ does absorb in the infrared portion of the spectrum, but it has not been shown (so far as I know) that the rise of the 70 parts-per-million of CO₂ in the atmosphere since 1960 has caused the temperature to rise to the extent that it has. One would need positive assurance that all other factors have been totally constant before cause and effect have been established, and that is the crux of the problem (particularly when it is known that water vapor accounts for about 95% of the heat retention by the atmosphere).

Anyone accustomed to be an early riser has known that the coldest nights of winter occur when there have been no clouds. That must be attributed to the low water vapor content in the atmosphere. What has been known

indisputably is that there have been large temperature excursions over the ages, without being caused by the burning of fossil fuels.

What has been known indisputably is that there have been large temperature excursions over the ages, without being caused by the burning of fossil fuels.

My own expertise is not directly in climate change, but in an area that borders on the subject, viz the factors governing the exchange of CO₂ with the atmosphere. Global warming advocates speak of gigatons of CO₂ being produced or absorbed by our planet. I have often wondered if they have sufficient knowledge of more mundane topics such as:

1. The yearly CO₂ production rate by an average human being
2. The CO₂ production rate of the average

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car per year

3. The area of trees needed to offset the CO₂ produced by one person and his or her car.

If there is real danger from global warming confronting us, how could Al Gore be so disposed to build a large house having such enormous electrical power requirements? His home in Nashville, TN was built in 2005 and, according to the electric power bill for that house, a coal-fired power plant would need to produce 21,724 pound of CO₂ to produce the electricity he would need. This is based on a Department of Energy report, published in 2000, on the CO₂ production necessary for a coal-fired power plant to produce a kilowatt-hour.

All are aware of Gore's antipathy toward gas guzzling cars, so it is interesting to know how many such cars would produce the same amount of CO₂ as the power plant? If an SUV were driven 10,000 miles/year, at one gallon of gasoline for every 15 miles traveled, there would be a need for 20.6 cars to produce the same CO₂ output. Yes, 20.6 cars! However, we must credit Gore with some integrity because he did make some changes that reduced the energy requirement of that house somewhat, but still having much larger power requirements than a normal home.

In 2010, Gore purchased a luxury home in Montecito, CA for \$8.875 million. It is 6,500 square feet in area, has six bedrooms, nine bathrooms, a large pool house and six fireplaces. Data on its energy requirements have not been published but there obviously must be a large carbon footprint associated with such a property.

Gore has immense wealth, presumed to have been accrued largely from his campaign against global warming, and he has the right to spend it as he wishes. However, being responsible for such huge productions of CO₂ reduces his credibility on the supposed global warming problem.

Before my retirement from the Naval Research Laboratory in 1987, I had conversations with several NOAA scientists regarding CO₂ matters and was, frankly, insulted by them. When I questioned some of their conclusions, an inference was made that I must be an idiot (or perhaps worse). For twenty-five years my research had centered on the uptake rate of CO₂ by algae and the rate of respiration of these microorganisms as a function of their growth rate. It would be a reasonable safe bet that I knew more about that

subject, and certain related ones, than most of the people at NOAA. Of course, I never was given the chance to talk about my background

It is unfortunate that the politicization of the conflict has caused some scientific publications to lose their objectivity. There should be no judgments made by a journal other than those based on research. That being said, I shall cite several instances in which Chemical and Engineering News, a weekly publication of the American Chemical Society, has been guilty of prejudice. Many readers of this publication have been offended by the liberal bias of

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the editor, Dr. Rudy Baum. Global warming proponents, including Baum, insist that, the evidence of global warming is overwhelming and all scientists subscribe to it. That is not so. For example, an organization headed by Dr. Art Robinson lists many thousands of members who do not accept the pronouncements of the global warming proponents. So how did Rudy Baum react to the threat posed by Art Robinson? He devoted a whole editorial to an ad hominem attack on Dr. Robinson, based on his editorial duties of a small medical journal, implying that Robinson could not know anything about global warming. How outrageous! If Robinson's statements were in error, by all means point out why they were wrong. The fact that Robinson espoused a different cause than Baum is irrelevant, so long as he has established facts to support his views. I read Baum's editorial in a state of wonderment.

A different aspect of Baum's performance is to be praised. On a number of occasions he has published letters (in the C & E News) severely critical of his liberal views, which is commendable. On the other hand, the number of complainers is sufficiently high that the claim "All scientists agree that there has been global warming" is not an accurate statement.

In a recent editorial titled "Throw in the Towel?," October 17, 2011, Baum wrote:

I keep promising myself that I'm going to write

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about energy and climate issues less often on this page. It's difficult to keep this promise because developments in these areas are coming fast and furious. Developments of late, however, suggest that there may not be much point in continuing to write about them because, *well, the game may be over*" (italics mine).

Then, as a basis for throwing in the towel, he quotes from a National Research Council study, also a distinguished panel formed by the Bipartisan Policy Center, and an evaluation by the U.S. Department of State regarding a proposal by

TransCanada, an energy production and supply company. No mention is made of the Kyoto proposal of many years ago, nor of the congressional denial of the Cap and Trade policy espoused by the current administration.

I have a suggestion to make for the proponents of global warming. It would be to conduct experiments showing the relative heat-holding properties of air mixtures containing varied amounts of water vapor, CO₂, methane, and aerosols. Perhaps the magnitude of such a project would make it impossible, but until it is done there will always be skeptics.

Climate Change and the Catholic Church

by Paul Crovo

In the wake of yet another fiasco at the latest U.N. Convention on Climate Change (COP 17) in Durban, South Africa, and on the heels of another release of damaging e-mails between high-profile climate scientists (Climategate 2.0), I believe this to be a propitious time for the Catholic church and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to faithfully re-evaluate their position on climate change science.

As a practicing Catholic and one who has also diligently researched this subject for the last several years, I am increasingly disconcerted to see the church and the bishops take such an inflexible position on an issue that has become

more fraught with controversy and uncertainty as new studies and data fail to corroborate earlier claims of the climate-change alarmist community.

Moreover, the Catholic Church's active membership in the National Religious Partnership for the Environment—the NRPE is an organization of mainline churches promulgating “environmental sustainability and social justice”—is disturbing given the radical environmentalist positions taken by various eco-theologian leaders in the history of this group and the principles the organization embraces.

Coming full circle, the Catholic Church and the USCCB, in associating with the NRPE and its more extremist affiliate members, have disingenuously communicated a message to church members conflating ideas of stewardship of the Earth with the debauched science supporting the claims of those in the radical environmentalist community.

Looking specifically at the Catholic Church/USCCB, the religious institution has taken its position on the climate change issue with the backing of any number of pronouncements from the papacy and those of various Vatican working groups. One study released this past May (“Fate of Mountain Glaciers in the Anthropocene”) was a working paper of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. The study concluded with apocalyptic projections of rising sea levels, floods and other climate catastrophes

Paul Crovo

Brief Biography

Mr. Crovo is a full-time employee of a major financial institution, working as an energy analyst. His experience as an energy analyst for the past twenty-seven years has led him to taking a much stronger interest in the climate change issue. He has done much independent research and has attended the International Climate Change conferences sponsored by the Heartland Institute of Chicago, a group who are in the vanguard of promoting a more scientific look at climate change research. Paul may be reached at pep3700@gmail.com

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based partially on data obtained from the deeply flawed Fourth Assessment Review (FAR, 2007) of the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

In short, I found the glacier data used to be statistically weak given the lack of historical glacier data available and the fact that the data sample included on .25 percent of globally existing glaciers. Furthermore, a plethora of other peer-reviewed scientific studies were found that clearly refuted the analysis. This lack of hard scientific support is just one example of the problems that plague the church's position on climate-change science.

Finally, the USCCB's tacit acceptance of the views of the U.N.'s IPCC and its adherents as fact implies that it subscribes to the scientifically flawed view that the "consensus position" is incontrovertible. Unfortunately, this position completely contravenes the essence of science via the scientific method (stated hypotheses and models are subject to constant testing and held as true only until disproven).

What steps should the Catholic Church and the USCCB take at this point? Above all, the USCCB needs to take a

position in which its first goal is the pursuit of the truth. It should not be too quick to disavow thousands of scientists whose work has been dismissed because it does not fall in line with the beliefs of the global environmentalist community, and it should respect the integrity of the scientific method.

Secondly, the Catholic Church and the USCCB should take a view that one's questioning of climate-change beliefs does not render one incapable of being a faithful steward of God's creation.

Thirdly, the USCCB would do well to take a more critical view of the work of the IPCC, especially in light of contravening evidence on the science and the blatant efforts by scientists in the alarmist community to suppress unresponsive studies and data.

Fourthly, the USCCB should carefully consider the optics of aligning itself with organizations professing beliefs in a radical environmentalist agenda, some of which go so far as to extol the virtues of population control and worship of the Earth to the detriment of mankind, beliefs clearly not part of Catholic dogma.

(The following quotes are cited from the October, 2009 ITEST conference: Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian Tradition, 2009.)

"With rare exception, churchmen are generally at their best when they speak of Biblical and historical theological principles of environmental stewardship, and at their worst when they speak of scientific and economic aspects."

- *Dr. E. Calvin Beisner*

"Before there was science, there was wonder. Before there was theology, there was prayer."

- *Sister Elizabeth Michael Boyle, OP*

"The first question is whether climate change is natural or anthropogenically induced; the obvious answer is both, but which predominates? The second question is: Does present evidence indicate an overall warming or cooling phase?"

- *Professor Benjamin F. Abell*

ITEST Member Receives Award

ITEST members join in congratulating Dr. William S. Sly, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at St. Louis University who was recently honored for his work by the Association of American Medical Colleges.

"Dr. Sly's research focuses primarily on rare genetic diseases that involve abnormal enzyme activity in the body's cells. The disease group, called mucopolysaccharidoses, cause problems with the development of bone and connective tissue and are often associated with mental retardation.

"Originally from the Metro East area, Sly attended St. Louis University for undergraduate and medical school. He served as director of medical genetics at Washington University before moving to SLU in 1984. Sly was elected to the National Academy of Sciences since 1989"... and has been a long-time supporter and member of ITEST. (from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 1, 2011)

From Reflections, December, 1990 by Father Robert Brungs, SJ

Directed to the US Bishops who subscribed to the monthly service:
Notes and Reflections. Fr. Brungs' Christmas Message to the bishops.

In the Fall 1990 issue of the ITEST Bulletin I wrote that there is clearly an apocalyptic trend in the environmental movement. Its promoters tend to cast environmental issues in the broadest possible terms. I mentioned the bumper sticker slogan: SAVE THE PLANET.

I also mentioned there that there is no way that we can destroy the planet, much less save it. We simply do not have the capability to do either. To suggest that we do casts the whole issue in terms of cosmic relevance. It is not too far-fetched to suggest that the movement sees the issues (and its role in the meeting the problems) in truly cosmic terms. It can lead to a whole system of "cosmic pieties" that are in fact in opposition to Christian perspectives and teachings.



I believe that we Christians have to keep our heads in the midst of the environmental fads that keep hitting the news. There are serious problems that must be attended to. But our response must be appropriate to the problem, not to propaganda about the problems. For instance, the tremendous attention that was given to "nuclear winter" has long since faded. Quietly in the scientific literature nuclear winter has been downgraded to at most "nuclear autumn." Also, the great "asbestos scare," which has caused such great expense for your diocese, has been recognized as just that -- the asbestos scare.

In dealing with these issues I believe we should tend to go slow in accepting the fad of the moment. I think that the course we should adopt is to stay away from quite specific problems. They tend to change rapidly as more information and better interpretation becomes available. This is especially true now when the worse-case scenario is usually the one that gets all the media attention. We should not be stampeded into what are later seen as inappropriate measures to cope with the issue.

I think that the best approach for the Church is to inculcate into people a thoroughly Christian love for the creation as God's gift to Himself. As Pope John Paul II mentioned in his New Year letter:

There is, of course, the vision of unity of all things and all peoples in Christ, who is active and present with us in our daily lives -- in our struggles, our sufferings, our joys and in our searching -- and who is the focus of the Church's life and witness. This vision carries with it into the larger community a deep reverence for all that is, a hope and assurance that the fragile goodness, beauty and life we see in the universe is moving toward a completion and fulfillment which will not be overwhelmed by the forces of dissolution and death. This vision also provides a strong support for the values which are emerging from our knowledge and appreciation of creation and of ourselves as the products, knowers and stewards of creation.

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Let's acknowledge the fact that "Save the Planet" is only a slogan and slogans rarely, if ever, should be considered or treated as thought.

Let's acknowledge the fact that "Save the Planet" is only a slogan and slogans rarely, if ever, should be considered or treated as thought. Yet, public perception is more often than not formed by slogans. In that sense, they should be considered carefully. They very much color any action that we might consider taking. Let's take the case of the "greenhouse effect" which has received such apocalyptic hype over the last few years.

As Professor Benjamin Abell wrote for our October Workshop on the Environment: "Societal influence on regional climate change is profound and in many situations irreversible. Societal influence on global climate change is another question. The impact is simply not known. Certainly, immediate attention and corrective measures should be brought to bear on desertification and deforestation, but there is no evidence of runaway global warming due to increasing carbon dioxide content in the atmosphere." In other words we have not had, and probably never will have, the ability to alter the global climate.

Also I believe we should be encouraging theologians to think along the general lines (not necessarily the details) opened up 50 years ago by Teilhard de Chardin:

In a pluralistic and static Nature, the universal domination of Christ could, strictly speaking, still be regarded as an extrinsic and super-imposed power. In a spiritually converging world this `Christic' energy acquires an urgency and intention of another order altogether. If the world is convergent and if Christ occupies its centre, the Christogenesis of St. Paul and St. John is nothing else than the extension both awaited and un hoped for, of that noogenesis in which cosmogenesis -- as regards our experience -- culminates. Christ invests himself organically with the very majesty of his creation. And it is in no way metaphorical to say that man finds himself capable of experiencing and discovering his God in the whole length, breadth and depth of the world in movement. To be able to say literally to God that one loves him, not only with all one's body, all one's heart and all one's soul, but with every fibre of the unifying universe -- that is a prayer that can only be made in space-time.

It is time that we try to understand and appreciate more deeply the sacramental nature of the creation in Christ. We do not need, I believe, a "creation theology," in the

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sense that has in the writings, say, of Matthew Fox. We do need a deeper and more affective (as well as effective) appreciation of the sacramentality of the New Creation in Christ. That is the creation that St. Paul (in 2 Corinthians) tells us is the only one we have, the one redeemed in the Body and Blood of Christ: "And for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here." I see no sense in developing a theology for a world that is no longer here.

December is a good month to begin this process of theologizing. As we prepare ourselves during Advent for the celebration of Christ's birth, we might ponder in our hearts and minds the change made in creation by the enfleshment of the Son of God. It gives an opportunity to ponder the destiny of all creation -- the entire cosmos --

the destiny to "share in the freedom of the sons of God." This message has been somewhat muted over the last few centuries. Its revival could help Catholics in particular (and Christians in general) make a genuine contribution to environmental concern and repair.

We ought to leave the specific approaches to any "clean-up" to those who are trained to cope with the problem. We should not, however, concede to just anyone the task of effectively promoting environmentally sound attitudes. Much of the problem is our fascination with the latest gadgets of civilization as well as our acquisitive attitude. In fact, there is no doubt that those acquisitive habits have degenerated into greed in much of the developed world. A love for the creation as redeemed in the Incarnate God and destined for freedom and glory in the final Kingdom could also be a great help in developing a sense of justice for our materially less fortunate brothers and sisters around the world.

Christmas is a good time to begin to proclaim, not the sacredness of the world, but its sacramentality, its pointing to the final covenant between God and all of his creation that will follow Christ's return to us. The whole basis of any Christian approach to the cosmos, to our love of this beautiful creation God has spread out all around us and in us, is, indeed, the Incarnation. We could begin to proclaim this message to Christians and to the world at Christmas. It would be a fitting time to proclaim the love God has shown us in the coming of His Son as one of us.

We do more than discover God in the whole length, breadth and depth of the world in movement. Our life in the Eucharistic Lord allows us to direct, to form and to implement the movement of the world. If we care to use the terminology, we Christians are the final culmination of evolution. The culture, of course, will reject this notion. Even some Christians would reject it as "triumphal." It is, however, the simple truth. In Christ, we are the co-creators of the "heavenly Jerusalem." As far as revelation is concerned, this is the simple truth. While it is something to revel in, it is not something to become euphoric or arrogant about. Besides being an enormous privilege, an unbelievably magnificent gift of God, it is also an incredibly great obligation. We shall return later to the sense (and fact) of responsibility, of obligation, of duty. Suffice it to say here, repeating Christ's words, from whom much has been given, much will be required.

I wish you a blessed Christmas.



Creation Lens

Exploring the World, Discovering God

Faith and Science Lessons with a Click

by Evelyn P. Tucker

Welcome to the world of almost instantaneous availability! Now with a click of the mouse we can have almost any knowledge appear on our screens.

Go to www.creationlens.org for Pre-K-Grade 8 interfaced faith and science lessons, which are very teacher-friendly and provide for students' active involvement. Free? Yes, free! You can download any or all of these: *Be a Scientist, Life Science, Earth Science and Physical Science* modules. There are also some other subjects (music, social studies, dance, literature) interfaced with a faith lesson, too.

Why is it important to interface faith and science, as well as faith and other subjects? There are several reasons for this. One reason is that to be an authentic Catholic School, faith must be interfaced or integrated into each and every subject taught. We believe and teach that every instructor is a catechist. The Catholic Faith is taught by every person in the school, on every day, in every word and deed. This website, www.creationlens.org gives us the opportunity to deliberately connect faith and science.

Another reason is that one goal of Catholic Education and Faith Formation is to raise up generations of young people and adults who can clearly enunciate what they believe and why they believe it. They are knowledgeable about the issue itself. They know their science, their history, their geography, their economics, their literature, **and** their faith. In other words they are truly educated.

If we learn facts in a vacuum, that is, science only in science class, what we have is a great mind for playing trivia games. It is when we make links and connections that all our knowledge becomes useful. If I know the

Creed but can't connect it to creation and caring for God's creation and how to truthfully do that, then my knowledge of the Creed can only take me so far. If I can link science facts, historical data, and other subject topics with my faith, and stand in the public forum as an informed citizen and speak with conviction, then my learning is purposeful and directed.

We can enhance the instruction of all our students in every educational setting by interfacing faith and learning as much as possible. One easy tool to use is the *Exploring the World, Discovering God (EWDG)* web site www.creationlens.org for Faith and Science lessons for Pre-K to Grade 8.

[Editor's note] Exploring the World, Discovering God [EWDG], a five year project fully funded by a \$225,000 grant from the Our Sunday Visitor Institute has reached school systems around the world. The latest stat. count at the ITEST office reported 209,000 actual downloads of the interfacing faith/science lessons.)

*Ms. Tucker who was the program manager for **Exploring the World, Discovering God (EWDG)** also served the St. Louis Archdiocese in a number of capacities: as DRE and as leader of the RCIA program in her parish, among others. She wrote this article for catechists in the Archdiocese of St Louis*

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