

FAITH & KNOWLEDGE

SCIENCE AND OUR CATHOLIC FAITH



The Catholic Church has, and always will, embrace the intersection of faith and reason. Many of the brightest “scientific” minds throughout history have been our beloved Saints! In fact, during the Dark Ages, the Catholic Church was responsible for virtually all of the scientific reading, writing, and learning.

It is too bad then that during the past fifty to seventy years a modern secular view of science has developed that separates faith and reason. From this separation, there is a perception that science is the only means by which “truth” can be determined, that reason and scientific inquiry is incompatible with the teachings of the Catholic Church. In reality, the Church proclaims just the opposite; that the intersection of faith and the gift of reason is a powerful tool to deepen our understanding of the mysteries of His Creation.

The Catholic Church is consistent in its support of the use of reason to pursue answers to questions through the application of the scientific method. We are free to reason, to discuss, and to investigate all scientific questions of this world—keeping in mind that there are certain core beliefs upon which all reasoning must originate.

...there is no conflict between evolution and the doctrine of the faith regarding man and his vocation, provided that we do not lose sight of certain fixed points.

Blessed Pope John Paul II

Specifically, the purpose of this document is to help guide discussions on:

1. Origins of the world
2. Concepts of change over time
3. Theories of evolution and creationism

THE THREE NON-NEGOTIABLES

From nothing came everything

There was a moment of creation when all things, materials, substances, and objects came into being. God brought them into being from nothing.

The Church takes no stance on what mechanism was used to generate the universe. One could reason that God used the “Big Bang” to create the universe, that God created the Universe just as it is stated in the Book of Genesis, or even that the Genesis creation story is a metaphor. The key point here is that from nothing came something and we believe that it was God who brought all things into being. Evolution does not discount God’s hand in biology; it illustrates His design in creating all matter and raw material in this universe and setting the process in motion over unimaginably long periods of geologic time which results in what we observe today.

The soul was created

In addition to God creating all matter, God also created our immortal soul – it did not evolve.

We come from a single set of parents

We are all imperfect beings; we all have original sin, passed down throughout time from a common set of ancestors. Without a single set of “parents” it would be possible that some humans have original sin and some do not.

Summary

It is possible to use science and reason to develop many theories on evolution, creationism, and origins of the world. As Catholics, we are free to investigate, reason, and debate about the many “unanswered” questions that exist in our world. God gave us the gift of reason, but we do have parameters and guidelines – three of those core “parameters” are outlined in this document: God created everything from nothing, God created the immortal soul, and we are descendants from a single set of parents.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Pope Pius XII’s *Encyclical Humani Generis* from 1950: <http://goo.gl/HDH8M>

The International Theological Commission’s statement titled “*Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*” from July 2004

Creation and Evolution: A Conference With Pope Benedict XVI in Castel Gandolfo: <http://goo.gl/AGcdp>

Catechism of the Catholic Church (specifically: CCC, 159)

Bishop DiLorenzo of Richmond, chair of the Committee on Science and Human Values in a December 2004 letter sent to all U.S. bishops: “... Catholic schools should continue teaching evolution as a scientific theory backed by convincing evidence. At the same time, Catholic parents whose children are in public schools should ensure that their children are also receiving appropriate catechesis at home and in the parish on God as Creator. Students should be able to leave their biology classes, and their courses in religious instruction, with an integrated understanding of the means God chose to make us who we are.”