

Why I Am Catholic

We put our faith and trust in Jesus, not in science and technology or merely human thinking.

Pope John Paul II spoke about this at a *General Audience* in 1985: "The extraordinary advances of science, particularly over the last two centuries, have sometimes led to the belief that by itself it is capable of answering all our questions and of resolving all our problems. Some have concluded that by now there is no longer any need for God. For them, faith in science has supplanted faith in God." (www.vatican.va)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* clearly states: "Basic scientific research, as well as applied research, is a significant expression of man's dominion over creation. Science and technology are precious resources when placed at the service of man and promote his integral development for the benefit of all. **By themselves however they cannot disclose the meaning of existence and of human progress.** Science and technology are ordered to man, from whom they take their origin and development; hence they find in the person and in his moral values both evidence of their purpose and awareness of their limits." (2293)

Further, "It is an illusion to claim moral neutrality in scientific research and its applications. . . Science and technology by their very nature require unconditional respect for fundamental moral criteria. They must be at the service of the human person, of his inalienable rights, of his true and integral good, in conformity with the plan and the will of God." (2294)

Dr. Francis Collins, long-time director of the National Human Genome Research Institute and a former atheist, states: "God gave us an opportunity through science to understand the natural world, but there will never be a scientific proof of God's existence." (*Interview for PBS series "The Question of God."*) Collins became a Christian in his twenties and was greatly influenced by *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. "Science explores the natural, and God is outside the natural. So there is going to be no substitute for making a decision to believe, and that decision will never be undergirded by absolute data-driven proof."

Father Raniero Cantalamessa, a Capuchin friar, in a Good Friday homily at the Vatican states: "Someone once said, 'When a man no longer believes in God, he is ready to believe anything.' The facts show that he was right." St. Thomas Aquinas also has a profound quote about believing: "To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible."

We cannot prove the Eucharist is The Body and Blood of Christ by placing a consecrated host under a microscope. Only through the eyes of faith can we see spiritual things and the deeper spiritual reality that science cannot prove. If we don't rely on the assistance of the Holy Spirit, then we will not see the spiritual dimension around us nor within us. Jesus said: "This is my body. This is my blood." If we don't believe Him we won't see as believers see.

Up until the 1500s, theology (the study of God) was considered the highest of sciences and the completion of all other sciences. All other sciences flowed from theology and connected back to God. Then the period of the Enlightenment began separating out the sciences and over time religion and science came into conflict. Philosophy—especially the study of being and study of knowledge—lost its spiritual foundation. Philosophy, and later psychology, became perceived by society as higher forms of knowledge and their emphasis became about human perfection absent of God.

In the mid-1900s, the Catholic Church began renewed dialogue with scientists and sought to renew the connection of faith and science. Pope John Paul II said: "Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes."

Pope Benedict XVI said in February 2006: "The dialogue between faith and reason, religion and science, does not only make it possible to show people of our time the reasonable-ness of faith in God as effectively and convincingly as possible, but also to demonstrate that the definitive fulfillment of every authentic human aspiration rests in Jesus Christ."

The main area of tension today involves human life. Science and medicine increasingly play God when it comes to the beginning, the extension, and the end of life. Everything from creating babies in test tubes, to abortion, to cloning, is science crossing over the boundaries God established. Only the Catholic Church has consistently stood against science exceeding its limitations. Other Christian churches have not been a consistent voice.

God has established clear moral boundaries and written His laws in all of creation. When we let science play God, it has great consequence for all of us. Let us always remember the words of the Creed: "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life."