

Handout: Faith and Science in the Classroom

The Foundation We Need to Build:

- Should I be a *faithful Catholic* or a *faithful Scientist*?
- **Important foundational point:** *To be a faithful Catholic encourages young people to be faithful scientists!*
- **Catholicism is the great “both and” religion:** We are to emphasize that true faith embraces faith **and** science, not faith **or** science.

15 Minute Discussion: What is your opinion on the relationship between faith and science?

Teaching Point and Application One: St. John Paul II’s “Wings”

Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth - in a word, to know himself - so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves. (Fides Et Ratio. Introductory Blessing)

Some points of clarity:

- **Are faith and science “co-equal?”** No. The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that faith is “above” reason. Science has a very limited scope that intentionally “filters out” the non-material. Faith deals with both the truths of the material world and non-material world. (159)
- **So, if there is a conflict between faith and science, is science wrong?** No. The CCC also affirms that there can be no real discrepancy between faith and reason - Truth cannot contradict truth. (159)
- **Science needs to be Scientific:** If a method claiming to be scientific does not contribute to our understanding of how the world works, then it is not science (Intelligent Design). (159)
- **Science cannot override moral laws:** The question here is not whether or not science can do something, but, on a moral and ethical level, should science do something? (159)

The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of (her or) himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are. (CCC 159)

Classroom Application: Diagramming St. John Paul II's "Wings"

- **Goal of the Project:** Integration of themes from your religion and science classes.
- **Create a visual:** An interactive image that can allow students to write their thoughts down about what they have learned about faith and reason.
- **Processing Question:** What do we learn about God and God's creation through the things we have learned about religion and science?
- **Point of Emphasis:** We can see that by studying the Bible and by studying the natural world we can come to know the God who created this world.

Teaching Point and Application Two: Faith and Reason as Pursuits of Wonder.



One of the most ancient images of Jesus - Pantocrator

What can we learn from this Icon:

Jesus' face - left side, mercy; right side, justice.

Jesus' hand - two and three - fingers "point" to the two natures of Christ and the three Persons of the Trinity.

Gospel - Twofold meaning - The Revelation of God made Man (fulfills the scriptures); the book of life - a figure of judgement.

Spirituality of Icons: As we gaze in wonder at the image of Christ, we pray to become the image that we gaze upon.

Christ's mind becomes our mind, Christ's words become our words, Christ's actions become our actions, Christ's heart becomes our heart, and so forth.

Application to Faith and Science: Gazing upon an Icon of Jesus can inspire us to love God. Gazing upon the beauty of creation helps us love God through loving God's gift of the world.

Connection Between Beauty and Goodness: The human heart desires to protect beautiful things. This implies that beauty points to a moral disposition of heart (goodness). If Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'* becomes nothing more than "a new commandment to follow," we've lost the point. *Love the Lord your God, love your neighbor, and love the gift of creation that makes those encounters possible.*

Classroom Application: Have the students bring a favorite picture of Jesus to school or have them draw their own picture of Jesus. Have a discussion with the students on how these images reflect how God loves them. After that discussion, provide images of people in the world. Talk with your students about how each person is made in God's image and likeness. How can we apply our moral teachings by recognizing the image of God in our neighbor? Lastly, how would you use your science class to connect these moral lessons to things we study in science? What would you have the kids bring to school that reflect the beauty of God's creation to your students? We will discuss this later on this morning.

Teaching Point and Application Two: Faith and Science as Pursuits of Humility

Discussion: When I brought the Steinbach meteorite sample to your classroom, what did you enjoy about my visit?

- What struck me about our students: None of them told me how insignificant they felt. Rather, they were excited to see something "that old" from "that far away."

A "pigmy's" life: We are small! (G.K. Chesterton)

- Are we nothing or are we something?
- What does our faith teaching us: *To grow in faith we are to embrace smallness.*

Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. (James 4:10)

Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me. (Matthew 18:3-5)

Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:43b-45)

Classroom Application: How can we address the question, "What is our place in the universe" that both affirms our smallness, but also acknowledges that through this smallness, God will lift us up? How can we inspire our students that despite the fact we are materially insignificant in this world, God has given us the ability to know just how small we are, allowing us a sense of meaning and purpose in that knowledge? Are there saints we can think of that we can talk about in religion that emphasize this smallness and humility? Lastly, how can we protect their ability to wonder in their smallness so that, as they grow up and begin to be humbled by their knowledge of the world, they can still allow God to lift them up in their smallness?

Thanks for a great day!