

# Enrichment: Character

## The Church Studies the Stars

**Sometimes people claim that faith and science are opposed to each other.** This is not true! The Church has a long history of involvement in advances in science. There have been many famous scientists who were Catholics. Many of these scientists were even priests. Louis Pasteur, a devout Catholic, was a pioneer in developing scientific processes for treating food products to make them safer. Father Gregor Mendel did the first work on genetics and inherited traits. Father Georges Lemaître proposed the big bang theory, demonstrating scientifically that the universe had a beginning.



*Vatican Advanced Technology Telescope (VATT), Arizona*

**The Vatican has even done its own scientific research, particularly in astronomy.** In the 1500s, when it was noticed that the date of Easter was coming earlier and earlier, the pope ordered scientific measurements to be taken of the length of the Earth's orbit around the sun. This led to the creation of a more precise calendar. In 1774, the Vatican established its own observatory, a site with a large telescope, and built a new telescope outside Rome in 1891. The Vatican Observatory still operates today.

**One great example of the Church's scientific contributions is the Vatican Advanced Technology Telescope (VATT).** In 1993, the Vatican became involved in the building of a new telescope in Arizona. This was one of the most sophisticated telescopes of its kind in the world and was capable of capturing much clearer images. Today, the Vatican provides money to fund staff and research at the telescope site. This telescope has made many discoveries, from asteroids and other objects in our own solar system to findings in other galaxies millions of light-years away.

**Faith and science are not opposed, because they answer different kinds of questions.** Science answers questions about *how* the world works. By using our God-given reason, we can come to understand better the workings of God's creation. Faith answers questions about *why* the world exists and what our purpose is in life. Our faith can be informed by our scientific discoveries, but faith gives us the ultimate meaning of everything.

### Journal Reflection

***How can learning more about the world around you help you appreciate God's creation?***

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