

Chapter 2: Faith, Reason, and the Eternal Law

God creates everything with a purpose and order so that we can know and understand the truth.

Chapter Summary

God creates all things according to His divine plan. This divine plan is called the eternal law. Within the eternal law, we can discover the mathematical, scientific, and moral laws through our reason. The moral laws tell us what is right and wrong. We should use our free will to obey the moral laws; we should choose to participate in God's divine plan by obeying the moral laws. The natural law is all the moral laws that we can know through our own reason. The revealed laws are those moral laws that He reveals to us and that we accept through faith. While the truths known by faith can surpass reason, they will never contradict it.



Pope Paul VI at the Vatican Observatory Schmidt Telescope, taken the night of the Apollo 11 moon landing

Faith and Science

According to national surveys, a primary reason people leave the faith is because of their doubt that religious teachings are true.¹ This is compounded by the misunderstanding that the Church is opposed to reason, science, and the pursuit of truth. This is a lie.

The Church holds that the desire for happiness and truth is “written in the human heart” by God (CCC 27). Truth is the correspondence or matching of our mind to reality. All reality flows from God, the Creator of all things. Faith and science, therefore, cannot contradict each other.

Even if we notice what seems to be a contradiction between faith and science, we should approach this difficulty with confidence because one of the following is true:

1. Our current understanding of what God has revealed is lacking.
2. Our current understanding through scientific research is lacking.

Questioning the faith and its mysteries is not a sin. The Church encourages us to question any difficulties we may find, but we should always do so with faith and trust that God is the source of all truth and that He would never deceive us.

Here are some ways your family can learn more about how the Church relates faith to science and reason:

1. Research the life of a Catholic scientist, such as Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Gregor Mendel, or Sister of Mercy Mary Celine Fassenmyer.
2. Look up the history of the Vatican Observatory and its contributions to astronomical research.
3. Look up a topic you are unsure about in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

For more family faith formation resources, go to the parent portal.