

Genesis & Science

Homily by Jerry Land, Diocese of Youngstown

Reflection on Genesis 1

It may be unavoidable that we often hear today about science and the modern advances of our time. Every day we see people staring at their phones, or tablets, looking up the latest news stories, or even doing online shopping. Even recently I have used a tablet in order to do some star gazing with some friends. In my youth instead of a tablet or smart phone my brother and I would take outside a bulky telescope in order to check out the night sky and strain our eyes while using a star map in order to figure out where certain stars would be at during different times of the year. You see, my brother was always interested in physics and astronomy, and I happened to be his lucky older brother that got to learn much about science while hanging out with him. Thanks to advances in science and technology the bulky telescope now sits in a corner, and along with his education we started using the fancy computerize telescopes at local universities. But there was always one question that seemed to bother me more than him. Since we are Catholic, I always wondered if science and faith were compatible. I would question things like evolution, and whether the Big Bang Theory is compatible with the idea that God created the universe and everything in it. Over time I have found, like my brother, that even when the reason of science cannot explain things we can turn to our faith. But are both compatible with each other? It is possible to live in a world of both science and faith, and recently I was reminded that, even though it may sound like a stretch, science and faith may be more compatible than we think.

If we look at the first chapter of Genesis, we find the story of the creation of the world, and everything in it. While forming the world, and the universe, God separated the sky from the land and the water. For God the creation of the universe took only a week, at the end of which he rested. (Yes, even God took a break at the end of the week, but that is another homily). While for God it may have only taken a week to create the universe and everything in it, science points out that the creation of stars and planets

takes a bit longer than a day. But if we look at our own solar system, we can see in science something that is described in the Bible.

When the solar system formed, according to science, it started out as part of a nebula, or what looks like a giant gas cloud. Over time, because of different gravitational affects, this gas cloud begins to separate into smaller sections, and begins to spin. This separation and spinning begins to turn the gases into things such as stars and planets. Now our own solar system is an example of this process. As our own solar system turned it separated our system into what can be viewed as four different areas: the sun, the inner planets with their rocky surfaces, the asteroid belts, and the gas giants. Now this took billions of years to happen, and there was a bit more to the formation of the planets than just some spinning. The point here is that if we look at the explanation of science the spinning of gases separates to form what we know now as our planet. Just like God separated the skies by a dome, and the water and land.

So, while the example I have used may be simple, faith and science are not always as simple as opening up the Bible to the first few chapters. Faith should have deep meanings for people with complex questions and answers that bring us into a deeper spirituality. Science can be just as complicated, and while trying to solve the questions of the universe bring us to a closer understanding of how the universe works, there is still much we have to learn. In the end faith and science do have a somewhat common interest. They both search for answers that may not always be answerable. When explored, both can point us into a direction that can hopefully bring us to the answers we desire while clearly showing us truth. In the end, truth can connect what science and faith teach.