



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE 2024 LEMAÎTRE CONFERENCE
OF THE VATICAN OBSERVATORY**

*Hall of Popes
Thursday, 20 June 2024*

[[Multimedia](#)]

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, good morning!

I greet His Eminence Cardinal Végez and Sister Secretary General. Now women are starting to be in charge here!

I offer you a cordial welcome and I thank you for your kind visit. In a special way, I express my gratitude to Brother Guy Consolmagno and to the other members of the community of the Vatican Observatory for their work in promoting this initiative.

You are meeting in Castel Gandolfo for the Conference on “Black Holes, Gravitational Waves and Space-Time Singularities” organized in honour of Monsignor Georges Lemaître. In the seven years following the last Conference, the scientific contributions of this Belgian priest and cosmologist have been recognized by the International Astronomical Union, which has determined that the well-known Hubble law should properly be renamed the Hubble-Lemaître law.

In these days, you have been discussing the latest questions raised by scientific research in cosmology: the differing results obtained in the measurement of the Hubble constant, the puzzling nature of certain cosmological singularities (from the Big Bang to Black Holes) and the very timely issue of gravitational waves.

The Church seeks to follow and encourage these discussions, because they stimulate the interest

and thinking of men and women in today's world. The origin of the universe, its ultimate evolution and the deep structure of space and time, raise a number of serious questions about the meaning of life. They also open before our eyes an immense scenario in which it is easy to lose our bearings. In this sense, we can appreciate the relevance of the Psalmist's exclamation: "When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you arranged, what is man that you should keep him in mind, mortal man that you care for him? Truly, you have made him little less than a God; with glory and honour you have crowned him" (*Ps 8:4-7*). Nor can we fail to appreciate the importance of these issues for theology, philosophy, science and the spiritual life.

Georges Lemaître was an exemplary priest and scientist. His human and spiritual journey offers a model of life from which all of us can learn.

Out of respect for the wishes of his father, Lemaître first studied engineering. He served in the First World War and saw its horrors at first hand. Later, he went on to pursue his priestly and scientific vocation. At first, he tended towards "concordism", namely the belief that veiled references to scientific truths are present in Sacred Scripture. Greater experience and spiritual maturity led him to realize that science and faith are two distinct and parallel paths, which are not in conflict. Indeed, the two paths prove complementary, inasmuch as, for the believer, science and faith are grounded alike in the absolute truth of God. Lemaître's journey of faith led him to the awareness that "creation" and "the big bang" are two different realities, and that the God in whom he believed can never be reduced to an object neatly catalogued by human reason. Rather, he is always a *Deus absconditus*, a "hidden God", shrouded in mystery and never fully transparent to human reason.

Dear friends, I urge you to continue to investigate, with sincerity and humility, the important topics that you are presently discussing. May the freedom and lack of conditioning that you have experienced in this Conference help you to advance in your various fields towards that Truth which is surely a reflection of God's eternal love. Faith and science can be united in charity, provided that science is put at the service of the men and woman of our time and not misused to harm or even destroy them. I encourage you, then, to press forward to the outer limits of human knowledge. For there, we can come to experience the God of love, who fulfils the deepest yearnings of the human heart.

From the heart, I bless you and your work. And I ask you, in turn, please pray for me. Thank you.