

Easter Sunday 09

The editorial for March 30 to April 6 of this year of America Magazine, a national Catholic weekly, had some very interesting things to say. Let me summarize it for you in the form of questions. Did you know that there are more stars in the universe than all the grains of sand on all the shores of ocean of this planet earth? Did you know that the universe is approximately 13.7 billion years old? Did you know that there are more than 100 billion galaxies (a galaxy is a large, independent system of stars), each with perhaps 100 billion stars of immense variety? Did you know that the universe is expanding? Did you know that UNESCO (which is the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) has designated this year the Year of Astronomy, whose motto is "The Universe---Yours to Discover"? Why? Because this year is the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first observations with a telescope which led to the discovery of the four moons of Jupiter, which, astronomers now tell us, has not four but sixty-four moons. Did you know that in that year, 1609, Galileo confirmed with the telescope what the Polish astronomer Copernicus had claimed some sixty years before--that the planets of our galaxy revolve around the sun and therefore the sun, and not the planet earth, is the center of our particular galaxy? We are

therefore part of a heliocentric rather than geocentric galaxy. The Church at first condemned Galileo because it believed that the earth had to be the center of our system. But no one, not even the Church, can fight scientific evidence, and so finally, sixteen years ago, Pope John Paul II rehabilitated Galileo, calling him a man of faith who “saw nature as a book written by God.” And the present Pope, Benedict XVI, has said that God has given us two books to read: the book of Sacred Scripture and the book of nature.

But what has all this to do with Easter? Well, Easter proclaims that we are not simply creatures of a day, as our lives would seem to say that we are. No, we are destined to share life with God forever. Just as Jesus rose from the dead to new life, our faith tells us that we too will be raised up by God to a new life after our lives here on earth. Now if that sound far-fetched, the reason could be that we think too small. The universe is bigger, older, more complex, more marvelous than we imagine. But if that is the case, so too is God who created it. And if God is that great, why should we refuse to believe that He can make us a permanent part of His vast creation? In other words, we have to think bigger about God and our world and ourselves as part of it. Unfortunately, most of us don't think big. More Americans believe in the biblical six days of creation than what the scientists say, and close to a majority do not

believe in evolution and are therefore unaware of the incredible universe in which we live.

You remember that phrase, “You ain’t seen nothing yet.” I don’t know who said it, but it is certainly true about our universe and about God’s plans for us. So, now that the nights are getting warmer, let us get outside now and then and look up at the stars and then remember what our Easter faith teaches us to believe about God and our Lord Jesus and ourselves.