



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: The Profession of Faith
I Believe in God



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Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Our panelists provide support and catechesis for religious formation at St. Philip Benizi Catholic Mission in Cedaredge CO. Our panelists are also in the process of discernment and study to become lay Dominicans who are also known as the Order of Preachers. So, welcome to our panelists as well as our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

Discussion:

Last time, we concluded a discussion of works and faith. This week, we will begin a new discussion as to the **Profession of Faith** and what it means to our lives.

(CCC: 14) Those who belong to Christ through **faith** and Baptism must confess their baptismal **faith** before men. First therefore the Catechism expounds revelation, by which God addresses and gives himself to man, and the **faith** by which man responds to God (Section One). **The profession of faith summarizes the gifts that God gives man: as the Author of all that is good; as Redeemer; and as Sanctifier.** It develops these in the three chapters on our baptismal faith in the one God: the almighty Father, the Creator; his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior; and the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, in the Holy Church (Section Two).

The **profession of faith** we say during the course of the Mass is known as the Nicene Creed.

According to a *Catholic News Herald* article, “The Nicene Creed and its Origins,” (28 Jul 2016 <http://catholicnewsherald.com/news/entertainment/101-news/faith/364-the-nicene-creed-and-its-origins>) “The Council of Nicaea was the first general council of the Church since the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem, which set conditions for Gentiles to join the Church.” the article related that in that time period, the church suffered divisions over the question of the divinity of Jesus. Because the dispute threatened peace within the Roman Empire, the Emperor Constantine called for a council to be held in the town of Nicaea. This meeting was held at the request of several concerned bishops to address doctrinal questions such as the divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, and how to calculate the date of Easter, among other issues. The council was attended by an estimated 318 bishops from Rome, Jerusalem, Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Greece, Asia Minor, Persia, Georgia, Armenia, Gaul, Hispania, and the Danube. The article also noted that the Council of Nicaea was the first time Church leaders convened to agree on a doctrinal statement.

According to a *National Catholic Register* article, “Arius, St. Leander and the Nicene Creed,” (13 Mar 2017 <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/kschiffer/arius-st.-leander-and-the-nicene-creed>), it was St. Leander, a Benedictine monk who subsequently became the Bishop of Seville, who is credited with incorporating the Nicene Creed into the Mass.

(Question: We make professions of faith during certain sacraments as well as during the course of the Mass, especially on Sundays and solemnities. We might wonder, though, what is the purpose of reciting a profession of faith?)

(Question: The Profession of Faith (both the Nicene Creed and the Apostle's Creed) begins with the words, “I believe.” Why are these words important to us?)

(CCC: 26) We begin our **profession of faith** by saying: **I believe** or **We believe**. Before expounding the Church’s **faith**, as confessed in the Creed, celebrated in the liturgy, and lived in observance of God’s commandments and in prayer, **we must first ask what “to believe” means. Faith is man’s response to God,** who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life. Thus we shall consider first that search (Chapter One), then the divine Revelation by which God comes to meet man (Chapter Two), and finally the response of **faith** (Chapter Three).

(Question: The profession of faith (Nicene Creed) begins, “I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.” This statement is an important starting point in that it separates us from those who believe in

multiple gods, such as the pagans, or those who do not **believe** in any god, such as atheists. **If we were asked, what is the basis for our belief, how would we answer that question?)**

(Observation: If we are engaged in a conversation with an atheist, one of the challenges which will be thrown at us is that the scientific method, commonly referred to as science, disproves God. There are many who **believe** that science and God are somehow in opposition and there are also those who **believe** that because of our **belief** in God, Catholics oppose science. My intent here is not to prove or disprove God, because our **belief** in God is a matter of **faith**, but there is a basis for our **faith** and a reason for our hope.

The assertion of the atheist is that the scientific method enables us to study our environment and observe how things work. They **believe** that such observation reveals that things work without evidence of any outside intervention, therefore, their conclusion is that such observation proves that nothing is moved by the hand of God, therefore, there is no God. In other words, because things are, that means there is no Creator. We kind of skip the critical question, which is, “What put everything in motion and who determined the laws by which everything is and interacts?” What the atheist often skips over is that our ability to observe “how,” does not always answer the questions of “who” or “what” is the cause which put all in motion and determines the precise perimeters by which all functions, lives, or dies.

There are two fundamental assumptions which are required to support the atheist view that there is no God. The first is that everything came from nothing and without cause. The second is that the creation and evolution of life is purely the product of accident without providence. The bottom line assertion is that science reveals that everything which is, is; and nothing caused it.

Of course, this is a much longer debate than the time we have today, but there are many scientists who believe there is no incompatibility between the observations we make through the scientific method and our **belief** in God. In fact, there are many scientists who express that as they study, the more they marvel at what they discover of God's creation.

Another assertion of the atheist is that they have no **faith** for there is nothing in which to have **faith**. Remember what article 26 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church said, “**Faith** is man’s response to God.” The reality is, they do have **faith**, but their **faith** is not in God. Unfortunately, their **beliefs** are most often based upon study, observations, or experiments they did not do themselves.

If someone conducts an experiment, but we do not replicate it and apply our own analysis, we are accepting the conclusions of another based upon **faith** of what we are told and that both their method and interpretation produce correct conclusions. What we do not fully confirm for ourselves, then, is accepted based on **faith** or at least in partial **faith** of the observation of another. The reality is that as individuals, we do not have total knowledge, so, we must begin our relationship with God through **faith** and our **faith** in His only begotten Son and the Holy Spirit.

This is a dilemma to which atheists do not wish to admit, but the reality is that our **faith**, whether we **believe** or do not **believe** in God begins most often based upon what other people communicate to us. Our personal answer to the question, though, while based on **faith** in the

experience of what others relate to us, does have some basis of confirmation through our own experience. What is missing for the atheist is a personal experience with God that they can recognize.

The atheist points to conclusions drawn from the scientific method as proof there is no God. Their **belief** is that scientific study reveals no proof of God, therefore, God does not exist. As one atheist asserted to me, “Atheism is not a **belief**, it is a conclusion from a lack of evidence.” My response was, “You presuppose there is no God. There was a time we had a lack of evidence of the galaxies, but they exist.”

Of course, what seals the deal for those who **believe** in God is when we recognize that encounter which we cannot explain through the senses of the body, but we experience through the senses of the heart. Sometimes it is because of someone who God sent to cross our path. Sometimes it is because of an event we cannot explain in the moment, but as we look back and reflect, we see His fingerprints as we were nudged to experience and have a relationship with Him.

The reality is, each of us has a different journey to our **faith**. For some of us, our **faith** was passed to us initially through our parents or some other loved one. For others of us, we tripped over it during some event within our lives that caused us to examine the mysteries of God. In every case, there is something we sense that draws us to seek a relationship with Him.

(Question: I am sure that everyone listening to this program will have a variety of answers to this next question, but lets ask our panel, **how did you discover God and what caused your faith to grow?**)

(Observation: As I mentioned earlier, some believe that if one is Catholic, they must be anti-science and that the Catholic Church itself is anti-science. The examination of history, however, reveals that the Catholic Church, especially through its system of universities, played a significant role in the development of what we now refer to as the scientific method. Such names as Albertus Magnus (1206–1280) a Dominican Friar, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) a Dominican Friar, Robert Grosseteste (1175–1253) the Bishop of Lincoln, Roger Bacon (1220–1292) a Franciscan, William of Ockham (1287–1347) a Franciscan Friar, and Andreas Vesalius (1514–1546) a Catholic, are mentioned as influencing the development of the scientific method. Other Catholics, such as Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) are also mentioned as influencing what we know as to what is recognized today as the scientific method.

(Question: Of course, the church as experienced some controversy over the years as to what the interpretation of science means in relation to religious doctrine, but there has been some historical embellishment and misinformation of these controversies as well. I'll talk another time about the challenges of finding historical truth, but for the purposes of this discussion, let me ask, **why is it a false assertion that if you believe in the conclusions of scientific study, then, you cannot believe in God?**)

(Observation: As we discussed, scientific study is not incompatible with a **belief** in God. Some of those who influenced the development of the scientific method viewed the methodology as a

means by which we may study and hopefully comprehend the mechanics of God's creation. It enables us to see and observe some of the many wonders of God's design. Through such disciplined observation, we may speculate as to the functioning of the universe which God created. The reason I say speculate is that we must interpret what we observe and make assumptions about what we cannot observe or measure. As the lessons of history reveal, there are many possible sources of potential errors in our study which yield subsequent errors in interpretation. There have been a number of incorrect interpretations over the centuries as well as disastrous political outcomes in relation to the politics surrounding those interpretations. The following are my personal observations as to the challenges which we must consider when we apply the scientific method and attempt to argue that our observations can be taken as absolute fact.

- **Did the study collect the relevant data?** (We must consider whether we were able to account for, control, and accurately measure all possible variables which may influence our interpretation of the data and subsequent conclusions.)
- **Did the study collect the correct data?** (We must consider whether our observations and measurements were accurate and sensitive enough to account for the range of preconditions, influences, and possible outcomes.)
- **Did the study collect complete data?** (We must consider whether the sample size is sufficient to account for the full range of preconditions, influences, and possible outcomes.)
- **Did the study interpret the data correctly?** (We must avoid the logical trap, often presented as a shaming mechanism in today's political field of scientific study, that the number of people who interpret the same way implies correct interpretation. A possible option is that the majority made the same or similar errors of interpretation or failure to account for all possible relationships and influences. We must consider the full range of possible explanations in our interpretation, as well as what we were not able to detect or accurately measure as reasons for possible misinterpretation.)
- **Did the study control for and prevent bias of collection and observation?** (We must consider our bias as to what we want to find and our political concerns such that we do not put our thumb on the scale as we collect and interpret data. We must also consider whether our effort to observe and measure generated a variable for which we must account in our analysis and interpretation.)

The most common argument of those who pit scientific study as in opposition to **faith** in God is the discussion of evolution. They point to scripture as being incompatible with what some **believe** is revealed by the fossil record, but scripture was not written as a scientific explanation of the process of creation used by God, it only states that God was the Creator (Genesis 1-2) and provided only a general description. Scripture does not go into exact detail as to the mechanisms of God's work.

The other assertion is that scripture tells us God created the heavens and the earth in six days, which appears to be in opposition with scientific methods of dating, but we must also remember that God's time is not our time. As Saint Peter reminded us, "But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day."

(2 Peter 3:8) The word, “like” does not provide a precise relationship, rather, an approximate example. All we can draw from the observation of Peter is that our perception of time is not the same as God's.

(Question: The atheist likes to turn to science as disproving the Bible, while at the same time telling us that we cannot use the Bible as a proof of our **faith**. What, then, is scripture to our **faith**? What role does it play?)

(CCC: 159) **Faith** and science: “Though **faith** is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between **faith** and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses **faith** has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth.” “Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the **faith**, because the things of the world and the things of **faith** derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are.”

Quotes:

Through steady observation and a meaningful contact with the divined order of the world's structure, arranged by God's wisdom,—who would not be guided to admire the Builder who creates all! – Nicolaus Copernicus

Who created these laws? There is no question but that a God will always be needed. – Barry Parker (cosmologist)

There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all....It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe....The impression of design is overwhelming. – Paul Davies (British astrophysicist)

I find it quite improbable that such order came out of chaos. There has to be some organizing principle. God to me is a mystery but is the explanation for the miracle of existence, why there is something instead of nothing. – Alan Sandage (winner of the Crawford prize in astronomy)

We are, by astronomical standards, a pampered, cosseted, cherished group of creatures.. .. If the Universe had not been made with the most exacting precision we could never have come into existence. It is my view that these circumstances indicate the universe was created for man to live in. – John O'Keefe (astronomer at NASA)

Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and one which has an underlying (one might say 'supernatural') plan. – Arno Penzias (Nobel prize in physics)

The laws of nature are written by the hand of God in the language of mathematics. – Galileo Galilei

People who are unable to understand perfectly both the Bible and the science far outnumber those who do understand them. – Galileo Galilei

For the Bible is not chained in every expression to conditions as strict as those which govern all physical effects; nor is God any less excellently revealed in Nature's actions than in the sacred statements of the Bible. – Galileo Galilei

“To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible.” Saint Thomas Aquinas

Final Thoughts:

As the knowledge of man as evolved, we have learned a lot through the scientific method, but to assert that because we do not see God's hand in motion, that there is no God, is a heavy leap. Just because we can observe and explain all the mechanics of how a machine functions does not mean that there was no designer or creator of the machine.

As St Thomas Aquinas noted, “To one who has **faith**, no explanation is necessary. To one without **faith**, no explanation is possible.” It may appear that we will forever be at an impasse with the atheist, for they choose not to observe the whispers or wonders of God and without that observation, they do not have the basis by which to begin an examination of the relationship God seeks to have with them.

For me, I cannot ignore what has happened in my life. I cannot ignore the hand of providence which reaches out to me. I experience a frustration in my inability to help the atheist understand for I feel the discussion is like trying to explain sight to someone who was born blind. I can only pray that one day they will allow their hearts to open a crack so that they will experience the moment where their heart will hear the whisper of God.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we continue our discussion of the Profession of Faith as we discuss our belief in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: **The Profession of Faith – I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ**