

Science Week in Parishes 2019

An outreach of Science Week at The Cathedral

In an increasingly global and secular scientific culture, saturated with technology and the market, the science–faith conversation is at the cutting edge of Christian engagement.

Module #2: The Melbourne observatory

Hairdressers, students, science and God

Marion, an older member of the 8 am congregation at St Paul's Cathedral recounts the story of chatting to her hairdresser about attending church. "God! I don't believe any of that," the young hairdresser exclaimed. "There is no evidence for God." Marion felt awful and lost for words; she wanted to say something but could

"I believe in science, so I couldn't be religious."

Years at church had not equipped Marion or David for such moments.

think of nothing to say.

Meanwhile, David, a science student who is keen to share his Christian faith, is faced with the same predicament when his friends typically respond, "I believe in science so I couldn't be religious."

Despite their good intentions, years at church had not equipped Marion or David for such moments.

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Marion and David's stories locate the science–faith conversation in everyday places. The stories also show the practical importance of introducing as many people as possible to this conversation.

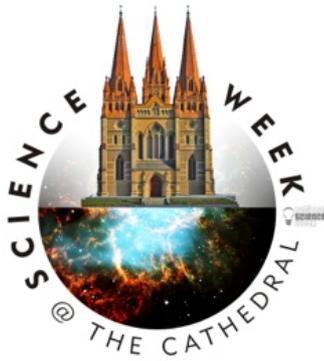
The material on the following pages is one of a number of 'modules' designed to promote helpful conversation in parishes about science and Christian faith.

- The modules are easy to use, designed for a minister or lay person to coordinate.
- We want this module to help people become more confident in answering your own questions about the science–faith conversation.
- The modules will help people be ready for moments such as Marion and David faced.

Some ideas ...

- Do you have a lay person in your parish who could lead a small group using modules such as this one?
- Do you have a scientist in your congregation? Why not invite them to speak about their work and their faith?
- Would you like a visiting preacher or speaker or discussion facilitator? We can help.

*Science Week in Parishes is an outreach of Science Week at the Cathedral, run every year around National Science Week in August. It offers ways for your parish to open this important conversation through activities at the Cathedral and by organising events, groups or speakers in the parish. **Further details:** Stephen Ames (sames@unimelb.edu.au), Chris Mulherin (ChrisMulherin@ISCAST.org), John Pilbrow (jpilbrow@bigpond.net.au).*



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Starry Southern Skies Tour at the Melbourne Observatory

This module suggests that church groups might use the Starry Southern Skies Tour at the Melbourne Observatory as an opportunity to think about the wonders revealed by science. The observatory describes the tour this way:

Discover the fascinating history of the Melbourne Observatory, built in the early 1860s as Melbourne's home of weather forecasting, time keeping and star charting. Gain a backstage view of these historic buildings and see the amazing night sky brought into focus with the powerful heritage telescopes. The observatory was the home for weather forecasting, time setting, weights and measures standards and for the surveying of Victoria. It was involved in providing critical scientific data for the smooth running of industries and civic institutions.

Tour details

- 90 minutes duration
- \$20 per person (minimum 12 to a maximum of 30)
- Not suitable for children under 8 years. Children over 8 must be accompanied by an adult.
- More details and group bookings: <https://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/whats-on/starry-southern-skies>

It is suggested that parishes could combine a tour of the observatory with an informal dinner and discussion.

The faith and science connection: Questions for discussion

- The moon is familiar to us but our understanding and knowledge of it has grown and changed over time. God is familiar to us too. How might our increase in scientific knowledge inform our desire to increase in knowledge of God?
- The observatory was used to help measure human time. How do we distinguish between God's time and human time?
- The observatory was used to help plan for and predict the future ...
 - What is the future that the sciences predict for the future of the universe?
 - What future does God promise for the whole created universe?
 - How does our faith in God interact with a scientific worldview with its desire to measure and predict?
- The moon inspires poetry as well as science. Hooker spoke of the sources of authority as Scripture, reason and tradition. The moon is studied scientifically. However ... the moon and God also inspire poetry and art. What do science and art add to our faith?