

## Science Department Policy on Evolution

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Science, especially modern biology, is based on the theory of evolution. It is the fundamental unifying theme that explains biology. Factual evidence for evolution has been shown in many instances. What we observe today is the consequence of that theory. For example, we accept that matter is composed of atoms, although no one has seen one atom or its parts. We accept this because of observations and experiments in both physics and chemistry that clearly agree with this idea.

Not every part of the theory of evolution is completely explained- many areas have yet to be subject to research. However, uncertainty about some parts does not mean we should abandon the whole. It simply recognizes that knowledge changes and ideas are modified or refined, as more knowledge becomes known.

Belief in evolution does not preclude religious faith or the other way around. Faith is the foundation of religion; demonstrable facts and evidence are the foundations of science. Religion and science are two separate issues. Science is a way of acquiring knowledge about ourselves and the world around us, but it is not the only way. Scientific knowledge may enrich aesthetic and moral perceptions, but these subjects transcend the scientific realm. Scientific knowledge cannot contradict religious belief, because science, by definition, can neither support nor oppose religious values. A religion class should not teach science. Conversely, a science class does not teach religion. Our department rejoices that being a Catholic school, we can invoke God's presence in our classrooms, or remark on the wonder of His creation. Issues of faith are left to the religion classes.

The Catholic Church, along with mainline protestant churches, accepts evolution. Some years ago Pope John Paul II, addressing the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (October 3, 1981) stated,

*The Bible speaks to us of the origins of the universe and its makeup, not in order to provide us with a scientific treatise, but in order to state the correct relationship of man with god and the universe. Sacred Scripture wishes simply to declare that God created the world, and in order to teach this truth, it expresses itself in the terms of the cosmology in the use at the time of the writer. The sacred book likewise wishes to tell men that the world was ... created for the service of man and the glory of God. Any other teaching about the origin and makeup of the universe is alien to the intentions of the Bible, which does not wish to teach how heaven was made, but how one goes to heaven.*

Further, on October 22, 1996, the Pope again spoke against interpretation of Biblical teachings as scientific rather than religious when he said,

*New knowledge has led us to realize that the theory of evolution is no longer a mere hypothesis. It is indeed remarkable that this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers, following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge. The convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favor of this theory.*

It is possible to believe that God created the world while also accepting that the planets, mountains, plants and animals came about after the initial creation, by natural processes. To those who feel there is an opposition between scientific conclusions and religious beliefs, we answer that they are not contradictory: they involve different sorts of issues and belong to realms of knowledge separate from each other.

Therefore, we hold that evolution is the best possible scientific explanation that we have. As a Catholic school and acknowledging God's creative power, we also accept the creative act found in the Book of Genesis as a religious truth.