



The Heavens Proclaim: Astronomy and the Vatican

By Vatican Observatory Publications, Guy Consolmagno, S.J.

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Why does the starlit sky hold such a profound fascination for us?

Perhaps because it is there that we encounter, commingled, the mystery of light and darkness two primal experiences connected with the beginning and end of human life.

Perhaps it comes from seeing the order, both overt and occult, in the movement of celestial spheres, with which we sense ourselves secretly involved.

Perhaps it is because we feel so small before the starry universe and in this way we begin to become aware within ourselves of the grand questions regarding our existence and our passing through life.

Why are there telescopes on the roof of the Pope's Summer home in Castel Gandolfo?

For more than 100 years, the Vatican has supported an astronomical observatory. But that should come as no surprise; from even before the Gregorian Reform of the Calendar in 1582, indeed dating back to the invention of the University (where studying astronomy was a requirement for anyone wanting a doctorate in philosophy or theology!) the Church has not only supported astronomical research...it has seen the study of the Heavens as a way of getting to know the Creator!

In honor of the International Year of Astronomy, the Vatican and its Observatory is delighted to present this small expression of support, filled with beautiful images from the Vatican's telescopes and wisdom from the Popes, to show that indeed.

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- Sales Rank: #1239805 in Books
- Published on: 2009-06-05
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .77" h x 9.14" w x 11.18" l, 2.31 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 240 pages



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