

INTENTIONAL SEEKERS

THINK



ST. DOMINIC'S

DECEMBER 2014 & JANUARY 2015

*If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch,
you must first invent the universe.*

Carl Sagan

INTENTIONAL SEEKERS

Overview

What do you mean by Intentional Seeker?

Last year at St. Dominic's we focused on Intentional Discipleship. It was an opportunity to explore what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and to become more intentional about discipleship. Let's face it, before we can truly be disciples we must acknowledge and engage barriers that prevent us from starting the journey. We all have barriers! The question is not whether or not we have barriers, it is whether we are willing to seek ways to overcome those barriers. This series is a way we can all explore some of the most common barriers present in our own lives and in the lives of those around us.

What is asked of me?

First, pick up a booklet at St. Dominic's each month and follow along. If you can, attend one of the *Explore* sessions (everyone is welcome) offered each month. If you want to go deeper, sign up for a *Small Christian Community*. Small communities will meet twice a month to discuss. We hope to be able to offer committed small communities and drop-in small communities as we get a better understanding of people's interests. Please see the back cover for specific dates.

When did the Intentional Seeker initiative start?

St. Dominic's kicked off the Intentional Seeker initiative in September 2014. We are gradually rolling it out to the whole parish. We hope to be able to connect people whenever they learn about the initiative or are ready to get involved.

What if I'm not sure how much of this I'm ready to do?

Pick up a booklet, and try it out. Pray about it.

I'm interested, but I just don't have the time.

We understand that this will not fit everyone's interest or schedule. We would like to ask you to pray for this initiative in the parish.

*Dear Jesus, grant your way to all who seek you,
your truth to all who want to know you,*

and your life to all who share your love.

Format

Each month we'll have a theme based around a common question or barrier. We'll pick scripture passages and other writings that will help us explore this theme. We'll spend the month going deeper and challenging ourselves. In September and October, we will roll this out to the parish. We will form several small communities. It is not too late to join one if you are interested (see the back cover). We plan to make this a yearlong initiative. Here's the planned format for each month:

WEEK 1 - EXPLORE

Break open the texts and explore the questions and barriers. Our goal here is to recognize that we not alone in our search. Many people today and many people throughout history have traveled this road. What are some of the answers that others have found? What insights speak to me? What difference would it mean in my life if I overcome this barrier? How can I help others who are struggling with this barrier?

You can explore the theme on your own through this book, or you can attend a presentation (see the upcoming schedule on the back cover).

WEEK 2 - SHARE

Consider joining a small community to discuss the themes and barriers in our lives. There is something powerful about gathering with others to explore our desires and our struggles.

If you can't join a small community, you can take time each day to pray the texts and reflect on your own journey.

WEEK 3 - ACT

This week we'll challenged ourselves to take some practical step in our daily lives. We'll do this on our own, so if you're part of a small community, there will not be a meeting this week.

WEEK 4 - SHARE

Gather again in your small community or reflect on your own.

INTENTIONAL SEEKERS

THINK

Starter

Is it possible to be a person who believes in science and God?

What are the barriers to believing in both?

Do you believe the history of the Church is one of exploring science or resisting science?

Why would a person of faith want to take science seriously?

WEEK 1 - EXPLORE

We live in a world of rapid change. Each day seems to bring new discoveries in science and new technologies to improve our lives. Things we used to attribute to God, we can now understand through the lens of science. Do we still need God? To many people today, belief in God seems to be a quaint throwback to a more superstitious era.

At the same time, there is a popular belief that states that the history of religion is one of suppressing science and holding back the freethinkers of every age. Anyone exploring belief in God today must be prepared to face the look that says, "Oh, I thought you were smarter than that." Or, "Do people still believe that stuff?"

The perception of the divide between religion and science is compounded by the debate in the media and politics in response to (and in support of) fundamentalism. Fundamentalists take a myopic approach to Scripture that leaves them believing in a "Young Earth" (> 10,000 years old). This gives them with very limited ability to face scientific evidence of geologic formation, dinosaurs fossils, evolutionary principles, etc. Gallup polls have shown that somewhere between 20% and 40% of American adults believe in a "Young Earth." Nowhere is this approach to scripture more harshly condemned than in the Pontifical Biblical Commission's document *The Interpretation Of The Bible In The Church*:

The fundamentalist approach is dangerous, for it is attractive to people who look to the Bible for ready answers to the problems of life... Without saying as much in so many words, fundamentalism actually invites people to a kind of intellectual suicide.

Let me start by stating that no one in the Catholic Church should ever ask you to turn off your brain. In fact, the history of the Church is one of deep thought and discovery. The Church finds no incompatibility between science and faith. Join us this month as we explore how this is possible. How can we think and believe?

*Love is rich in intelligence and
intelligence is full of love.*

Pope Benedict XVI

Exercises

Take some time to reflect on science and faith:

- 1) Make a list of things that **can** be explored by the scientific method
- 2) Make a list of things that **can't** be explored by the scientific method

(1)

(2)

e.g., nature of the universe

e.g., love

e.g., the human body

e.g., purpose of my life

How important is science to me?

Is science enough for me?

How do faith and science work together in my life?

Main Texts

Why Do Things Bother To Exist?

“Even if there is only one possible unified theory [governing the universe], it is just a set of rules and equations. What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe? The usual approach of science of constructing a mathematical model cannot answer the questions of why there should be a universe for the model to describe. Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing? Is the unified theory so compelling that it brings about its own existence? Or does it need a creator, and, if so, does he have any other effect on the universe? And who created him?”

-- **Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time***

Note: Stephen Hawking has since concluded that he doesn't need God to explain the existence of the universe. That is the point where the Catholic Church would differ with him.

Read prayerfully: What thoughts arise out of this reading?

Impetus Towards Life

“Some physicists have come to the conclusion that from the first moment of the Big Bang there has been an impetus towards life. If the universe had unfolded *one trillionth of a trillionth* of a percent slower, the gravitational force would have been too great and the universe would have imploded before anything of significance occurred. If, however, the universe had unfolded *one trillionth of a trillionth* of a percent faster, matter would have escaped the gravitational pull and the cosmos would have been flung apart before anything could happen. It is not far-fetched to conclude that there has been an intentionality toward life all along.”

-- **Judy Cannato; *Radical Amazement: Contemplative Lessons From Black Holes, Supernovas, and Other Wonders of the Universe***

Read prayerfully: What thoughts arise out of this reading?

Led By The Hand Of God

If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. Such is not merely required by modern man, but harmonizes also with the will of the Creator. For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts... Indeed whoever labors to penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind, even though he is unaware of the fact, is nevertheless being led by the hand of God, who holds all things in existence, and gives them their identity. Consequently, we cannot but deplore certain habits of mind, which are sometimes found too among Christians, which do not sufficiently attend to the rightful independence of science...lead many minds to conclude that faith and science are mutually opposed.

But if the expression, the independence of temporal affairs, is taken to mean that created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator, anyone who acknowledges God will see how false such a meaning is. For without the Creator the creature would disappear.

-- Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 36

Read prayerfully: What thoughts arise out of this reading?

Intelligence Is Full Of Love

Charity in truth requires first of all that we know and understand, acknowledging and respecting the specific competence of every level of knowledge. Charity is not an added extra, like an appendix to work already concluded in each of the various disciplines: it engages them in dialogue from the very beginning. The demands of love do not contradict those of reason. Human knowledge is insufficient and the conclusions of science cannot indicate by themselves the path towards integral human development. There is always a need to push further ahead: this is what is required by charity in truth. Going beyond, however, never means prescinding from the conclusions of reason, nor contradicting its results. Intelligence and love are not in separate compartments: *love is rich in intelligence and intelligence is full of love.*

- Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity In Truth*, 30

Read prayerfully: What thoughts arise out of this reading?

Key Insights

General

- Throughout history Catholics have explored the created world as a way of gaining insight into its Creator.
- Catholics created the university system, the Scientific Laws of Evidence, the Big Bang theory and many more.
- Science can't give us everything.

Why Do Things Bother To Exist?

- What breathes life into the Laws of Nature?
- The Big Bang theory (more than any other scientific discovery) has pointed us towards a Creator.
- Yet, we don't want to limit ourselves to a God who only does the things we can't explain.

Impetus Towards Life

- Here you see a difference between exploring science through the eyes of faith and without the eyes of faith.
- Is it possible that creation reveals something to us about our Creator? The Catholic answer is "yes," but it creation can tell us everything about the Creator.
- What is the dignity of human life?
- What is the dignity of human reason?

Led By The Hand Of God

- Different fields of study demand autonomy (rules that govern that field) as long as they don't make a god of themselves.
- "all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order"
- We need to leave room for God

Intelligence Is Full Of Love

- "Human knowledge is insufficient and the conclusions of science cannot indicate by themselves the path towards integral human development"
- "love is rich in intelligence and intelligence is full of love"

CLOSING OF THE SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL
ADDRESS OF POPE PAUL VI TO MEN OF THOUGHT AND SCIENCE
8 December 1965

A very special greeting to you, seekers after truth, to you, men of thought and science, the explorers of man, of the universe and of history, to all of you who are pilgrims enroute to the light and to those also who have stopped along the road, tired and disappointed by their vain search.

Why a special greeting for you? Because all of us here, bishops and Fathers of the council, are on the lookout for truth. What have our efforts amounted to during these four years except a more attentive search for and deepening of the message of truth entrusted to the Church and an effort at more perfect docility to the spirit of truth.

Hence our paths could not fail to cross. Your road is ours. Your paths are never foreign to ours. We are the friends of your vocation as searchers, companions in your fatigues, admirers of your successes and, if necessary, consolers in your discouragement and your failures.

Hence for you also we have a message and it is this: Continue your search without tiring and without ever despairing of the truth. Recall the words of one of your great friends, St. Augustine: "Let us seek with the desire to find, and find with the desire to seek still more." Happy are those who, while possessing the truth, search more earnestly for it in order to renew it, deepen it and transmit it to others. Happy also are those who, not having found it, are working toward it with a sincere heart. May they seek the light of tomorrow with the light of today until they reach the fullness of light.

But do not forget that if thinking is something great, it is first a duty. Woe to him who voluntarily closes his eyes to the light. Thinking is also a responsibility, so woe to those who darken the spirit by the thousand tricks which degrade it, make it proud, deceive and deform it. What other basic principle is there for men of science except to think rightly?

For this purpose, without troubling your efforts, without dazzling brilliance, we come to offer you the light of our mysterious lamp which is faith. He who entrusted this lamp to us is the sovereign Master of all thought, He whose humble disciples we are, the only one who said and could have said: "I am the light of the world, I am the way, the truth and

the life."

These words have meaning for you. Never perhaps, thank God, has there been so clear a possibility as today of a deep understanding between real science and real faith, mutual servants of one another in the one truth. Do not stand in the way of this important meeting. Have confidence in faith, this great friend of intelligence. Enlighten yourselves with its light in order to take hold of truth, the whole truth. This is the wish, the encouragement and the hope, which, before disbanding, is expressed to you by the Fathers of the entire world assembled at Rome in council.

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES**
Monday, 6 November 2006

I am pleased to greet the members of Pontifical Academy of Sciences on the occasion of this Plenary Assembly, and I thank Professor Nicola Cabibbo for his kind words of greeting in your name. The theme of your meeting – “Predictability in Science: Accuracy and Limitations” – deals with a distinctive attribute of modern science. Predictability, in fact, is one of the chief reasons for science’s prestige in contemporary society. The establishment of the scientific method has given the sciences the ability to predict phenomena, to study their development, and thus to control the environment in which man lives.

This increasing ‘advance’ of science, and especially its capacity to master nature through technology, has at times been linked to a corresponding ‘retreat’ of philosophy, of religion, and even of the Christian faith. Indeed, some have seen in the progress of modern science and technology one of the main causes of secularization and materialism: why invoke God’s control over these phenomena when science has shown itself capable of doing the same thing? Certainly the Church acknowledges that “with the help of science and technology..., man has extended his mastery over almost the whole of nature”, and thus “he now produces by his own enterprise benefits once looked for from heavenly powers” ([*Gaudium et Spes*, 33](#)). At the same time, Christianity does not posit an inevitable conflict between supernatural faith and scientific progress. The very starting-point of Biblical revelation is the affirmation that God created human beings, endowed them with reason, and set them over all the creatures of the earth. In this way, man has become the steward of creation and God’s “helper”. If we think, for example, of how modern science, by predicting natural phenomena, has contributed to the

protection of the environment, the progress of developing nations, the fight against epidemics, and an increase in life expectancy, it becomes clear that there is no conflict between God's providence and human enterprise. Indeed, we could say that the work of predicting, controlling and governing nature, which science today renders more practicable than in the past, is itself a part of the Creator's plan.

Science, however, while giving generously, gives only what it is meant to give. Man cannot place in science and technology so radical and unconditional a trust as to believe that scientific and technological progress can explain everything and completely fulfil all his existential and spiritual needs. Science cannot replace philosophy and revelation by giving an exhaustive answer to man's most radical questions: questions about the meaning of living and dying, about ultimate values, and about the nature of progress itself. For this reason, the Second Vatican Council, after acknowledging the benefits gained by scientific advances, pointed out that the "scientific methods of investigation can be unjustifiably taken as the supreme norm for arriving at truth", and added that "there is a danger that man, trusting too much in the discoveries of today, may think that he is sufficient unto himself and no longer seek the higher values" (*ibid.*, 57).

Scientific predictability also raises the question of the scientist's ethical responsibilities. His conclusions must be guided by respect for truth and an honest acknowledgment of both the accuracy and the inevitable limitations of the scientific method. Certainly this means avoiding needlessly alarming predictions when these are not supported by sufficient data or exceed science's actual ability to predict. But it also means avoiding the opposite, namely a silence, born of fear, in the face of genuine problems. The influence of scientists in shaping public opinion on the basis of their knowledge is too important to be undermined by undue haste or the pursuit of superficial publicity. As my predecessor, Pope John Paul II, once observed: "Scientists, precisely because they 'know more', are called to 'serve more'. Since the freedom they enjoy in research gives them access to specialized knowledge, they have the responsibility of using that knowledge wisely for the benefit of the entire human family" ([*Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences*](#), 11 November 2002).

Dear Academicians, our world continues to look to you and your colleagues for a clear understanding of the possible consequences of many important natural phenomena. I think, for example, of the continuing threats to the environment which are affecting whole peoples,

and the urgent need to discover safe, alternative energy sources available to all. Scientists will find support from the Church in their efforts to confront these issues, since the Church has received from her divine founder the task of guiding people's consciences towards goodness, solidarity and peace. Precisely for this reason she feels in duty bound to insist that science's ability to predict and control must never be employed against human life and its dignity, but always placed at its service, at the service of this and future generations.

There is one final reflection that the subject of your Assembly can suggest to us today. As some of the papers presented in the last few days have emphasized, the scientific method itself, in its gathering of data and in the processing and use of those data in projections, has inherent limitations that necessarily restrict scientific predictability to specific contexts and approaches. Science cannot, therefore, presume to provide a complete, deterministic representation of our future and of the development of every phenomenon that it studies. Philosophy and theology might make an important contribution to this fundamentally epistemological question by, for example, helping the empirical sciences to recognize a difference between the mathematical inability to predict certain events and the validity of the principle of causality, or between scientific indeterminism or contingency (randomness) and causality on the philosophical level, or, more radically, between evolution as the origin of a succession in space and time, and creation as the ultimate origin of participated being in essential Being.

At the same time, there is a higher level that necessarily transcends all scientific predictions, namely, the human world of freedom and history. Whereas the physical cosmos can have its own spatial-temporal development, only humanity, strictly speaking, has a history, the history of its freedom. Freedom, like reason, is a precious part of God's image within us, and it can never be reduced to a deterministic analysis. Its transcendence vis-à-vis the material world must be acknowledged and respected, since it is a sign of our human dignity. Denying that transcendence in the name of a supposed absolute ability of the scientific method to predict and condition the human world would involve the loss of what is human in man, and, by failing to recognize his uniqueness and transcendence, could dangerously open the door to his exploitation.

Dear friends, as I conclude these reflections, I once more assure you of my close interest in the activities of this Pontifical Academy and of my prayers for you and your families. Upon all of you I invoke Almighty God's blessings of wisdom, joy and peace.

Recap & Prepare for Week 2

- Reread the text for this week.
 - Underline phrases that speak to your heart
 - Pick a phrase each morning, and write it on a slip of paper
 - Hold that theme in your heart throughout the day
 - At the end of the day, pray an Examen (below)
- Reflection questions:

What is the relationship between science and religion?

What is the purpose of your human reason?

How can the gift of reason bring you closer to God?

A Daily Prayer - The Examen

The Examen is an extremely fruitful daily prayer (set aside 5-15 minutes):

1. Take a moment to recognize that you're in the presence of God
2. Thank God for the many gifts in your life
3. Invite the Spirit to walk back with you through your day, focusing on the specific theme of the day. Take the time to stop and really see that moment with new perspective.
4. Pray for God's guidance for tomorrow.

WEEK 2 - SHARE

Individual Option

- Find 20-30 minutes where you won't be interrupted.
- (10-15 minutes) Follow the prayer format (*Lectio Divina*) in the group exercise below.
- (10-20 minutes) Spend time reflecting on the questions outlined above.

Advice For Participating In Small Christian Communities

- The facilitator's role is to guide the flow of the meeting. They are not in the group to be experts. Help the facilitators by following their lead.
- During the discussion period, there will be multiple questions or topic for conversation. It is best to take them one at a time (i.e., let everyone share about one before moving to the next).
- Don't attempt to give the "right answer." Just share your experience, insights, and perspective.
- Please stay on topic (the questions asked).
- Pay attention to time. Keep your answers on the shorter side. You can always add more later.
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak (i.e., give others a chance to speak before sharing a second time).
- It's ok to not share if you don't feel comfortable, but challenge yourself to share occasionally.
- Give your attention to the person speaking. Please don't start side conversations.
- Avoid asking follow-up questions. Let people share what they want to share. It is always good to affirm others.
- Avoid answering other people's questions (i.e., taking on the role of expert).



How To Pray The Scripture Using *Lectio Divina*

- Goal:
 - Engage one of the scriptures at a deeper level
 - Allow the Spirit to teach our hearts
 - Provide fruit to lead into the discussion and sharing
- Steps (Should take 10-15 minutes):
 - *Lectio* (Reading, 2-5 minutes)
 - A participant reads the scripture passage
 - 30-60 seconds of silence
 - A participant reads the scripture passage
 - As the scripture is being read, the participants are invited to find a word, phrase, image, or idea that resonates with them. We'll call this the *focus*.
 - Example: Imagine reading the Our Father text from Matthew 6. People might focus on: "Thy Kingdom Come," "Lead Us," "Our," the idea of fatherhood, an image of God's Kingdom, Do I forgive others? Etc.
 - *Meditatio* (Meditate, 5-10 minutes)
 - Stay with the focus from above.
 - There are different ways to do this: Why does it resonate? What does it mean in my life today? Repeat it as a mantra. Imagine it. How is this connected to seeking God?
 - *Oratio* (Pray, 1-2 minutes)
 - Whatever comes up in meditation, form into a silent prayer offered to God.
 - *Contemplatio* (Contemplate, 1-2 minutes)
 - After speaking a prayer to God, sit and listen or rest in God's love.
 - This leads into discussion and sharing.
 - Start with insights from the prayer.
 - Transition to sharing about seeking God.
- Tips
 - There is no "right way," do what works for you
 - Embrace the silence
 - Let God find you

Small Christian Community Process - First Meeting

(Suggested timing based on a 60/90 minute meeting)

- Welcome & Check In *(5/10 minutes)*
- Review Format *(5/5 minutes)*
 - Review the participant's advice (page 18)
 - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
 - Review the prayer format : *Lectio Divina* (page 19)
 - Discussion will follow based on the prayer and the questions (page 18).
- Prayer *(10/15 minutes)*
 - Transition Passage: "*Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?*" (A Brief History of Time)
 - *Lectio Divina*: On the Judy Cannato quote on page 9.
- Discussion *(30/45 minutes)*
 - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
 - Discussing the reflection questions (page 17)
- Action/Request *(5/10 minutes)*
 - The practical exercise is listed on the next page
 - Participants can share thoughts and plans
 - Review date of the next group session
 - Participants can request prayers from the group

WEEK 3 - ACT

Revisit the exercise on page 6-7

Action: Take time to reflect on the wonder of creation around you.

Reflect on its meaning if God does not exist.

Reflect on its meaning if God does exist.

WEEK 4 - SHARE

Preparing

- Continue to use the phrases you highlighted when you prepared for Week 2:
 - Pick a phrase each morning, and write it on a slip of paper
 - Hold that theme in your heart throughout the day
 - At the end of the day, pray an Examen (page 17)
- Week 3 exercise:
 - Plan to share something about your Week 3 exercise
 - If you were not able to do it, plan to share your barriers.

Individual Option

- Find 20-30 minutes where you won't be interrupted.
- (10-15 minutes) Follow the prayer format (*Lectio Divina*) in the group exercise below.
- (10-20 minutes) Journal about the experience of the exercise from Week 3.

Small Christian Community Process - Second Meeting

(Suggested timing based on a 60/90 minute meeting)

- Welcome & Check In (5/10 minutes)
- Review Format (5/5 minutes)
 - Review the participant's advice (page 18)
 - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
 - Review the prayer format : *Lectio Divina* (page 19)
 - Discussion will follow based on the prayer the Act exercise (page 21)
- Prayer (10/15 minutes)
 - Transition Passage: "love is rich in intelligence and intelligence is full of love" (Charity In Truth)
 - *Lectio Divina*: Gaudium et Spes (page 10)
- Discussion (30/45 minutes)
 - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
 - Discussing insights from the Act exercise
- Action/Request (5/10 minutes)
 - Review date of the next Explore session
 - Participants can request prayers from the group

Additional Notes

THREE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH INTENTIONAL SEEKERS

1. Pick up a booklet, and explore on your own. -or-
2. Attend an “Explore” session to learn about this month’s scripture. Everyone is welcome. - or-
3. Check out a Small Christian Community to join with others to go deeper.



UPCOMING “EXPLORE” SESSIONS

~~Young Adults’ Session*, Wed., Dec. 3, 7:30-9 PM, Parish Hall~~

~~Sunday, December 7, 10:30-11:30 AM, School Basement~~

Monday, January 5, 7:30-9 PM, Aquinas Room

Young Adults’ Session*, Wed., Jan. 7, 7:30-9 PM, Parish Hall

Sunday, January 18, 10:30-11:30 AM, School Basement

* The Young Adults group is a community of single and married Catholic adults in our 20s and 30s; to find out more, visit: <http://stdominics.org/youngadults>



CONNECT WITH A SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Contact Scott Moyer at scott@stdominics.org

or come to an Explore session to get connected