

LUX EDMUNDI: REFLECTION: MARCH, 2015

The great talking-point amongst astronomers right now is the discovery of “the most luminous quasar with the most massive black hole among all the known high-redshift quasars”. It is argued that the comparatively early development of these newly-discovered astronomical monsters will require a re-thinking of our understanding of the origins of the universe. In reference to the latter, it is pertinent to note that Catholic tradition sees no real clash between science and religion, reason and faith, and regards the two as complementary. Classically, St. Thomas Aquinas – and Pope St. John Paul II after him – insisted on the harmony between them: “Both the light of reason and the light of faith come from God, [Aquinas] argued; hence there can be no contradiction between them (*Fides et Ratio*, Encyclical Letter on the Relationship between Faith and Reason, 1998, para. 43)”. We may, therefore, respond thus to the discovery of what is now designated SDSS J0100+2802: “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork (*Psalm 19:1*)”.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not made anything that was made (*John 1:1-3*)”. God uttered the Word, and, in the Word, spoke the “*Fiat*”, the “Let there be”, which precipitated the Big Bang and everything that followed from it, these newly-discovered phenomena included. These were commenced in, by and through the Word of God.

“The Word became flesh (*John 1:14*)”. The very same Word, through whom all things were made, the entire universe, from quarks to quasars, SDSS J1000+2802 included, was incarnate of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He became man on the third rock from our Sun and it is, in fact, this stupendous truth that we commemorate and celebrate on the 25th of March, the Solemnity of the Annunciation.

The Word of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became man “that [we] might have life, and have it abundantly (cf. *John 10:10*)”. Indeed, as is adumbrated at each Mass, the Fathers of the Church insisted that Christ shared in our humanity that we might share in his divinity. “The Word became flesh to make us ‘partakers of the divine nature’. ‘For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God’. ‘For the Son of God became man so that we might become God’. ‘The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods’ (*CCC, 460*)”.

We might wonder if the concept of divinisation has anything at all to say to us as we toil “among the bulks of actual things”. It has, in fact, everything to say. “Where there is no vision, the people perish (*Proverbs 29:18 KJV*)”. The research suggests that, without a vision of their role and functions, professional people, especially leaders, are simply less effective. Know-How needs Know-Why. Without a Catholic vision of what they are and of what they are about, Catholic teachers will, likewise, be less effective precisely as Catholic. Catholic teachers are about the formation of the young in Christ, of Christ in the young. They are about helping each of their students become an *alter Christus*, another Christ. They are, in fact, about advancing the process of divinisation in their charges. As it did for Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice, such a high vision of Catholic teaching will make the undoubted burdens of school life bearable and, yes, worthwhile. It will sustain us in the face of every challenge, help us on our way, even “through the valley of the shadow of death (*Ps 23:4*)”.