[Patience] is a theme that I have thought about in the years following upon my reading of a book by John Navone, an Italian-American author, with the striking title The Theology of Failure, in which he explains how Jesus practiced patience. Patience, he adds, is forged in dialogue with human limitations. There are times when our lives do not call for our ‘doing,’ but for our ‘enduring,’ bearing up (from the Greek hypomone) with our own limits and those of others. Patience means accepting the fact that time is required for our maturational development and patience means allowing for time to shape and integrate our lives.

Favorable reviews of the book were published in Corriere della Sera (29 March, 2013) and Il Foglio (30 March, 2013), which stated that the pope “adores the theology of failure of the Jesuit John Navone.”

Fr. Navone was of course delighted with the pope’s endorsement. “The quote is a remarkable inasmuch as I am the only American theologian Pope Francis quotes. The only other theologian he quotes is the German Walter Kasper. The fact that he takes note of my being an Italian-American implies our affinity as he is an Italian South American. He read the Italian version of my book The Theology of Failure, which indicated on the back cover that I am an Italian American” (O’Dea News, Summer 2013).

Fr. Navone has enjoyed a distinguished career as an educator and theologian. He was born in 1930 to Italian immigrant parents in Seattle’s Queen Anne neighborhood. He entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1949 and began his formation at Mt. St. Michael’s in Spokane. After receiving a Master’s Degree in Philosophy from Gonzaga in 1956 and completing theological studies at Regis College and the University of Toronto, he went to Rome in 1958. He received his doctorate at the Pontifical Gregorian University in 1966 and has spent his career teaching and writing, mostly in Rome. While on the faculty at the Gregorian University, Fr. Navone became a well-known and much-sought-after figure in Italian and international intellectual circles with regular appearances in the major media of the world and recognition, not only as one of the most prominent Catholic priests in the United States, but as one of the leading theologians of beauty in world history.

Fr. Navone has written thirty-five books with a bibliography of articles in several languages that runs over twelve pages. Since his return to Gonzaga in 2009, he has continued to publish and has been a prize asset to the Gonzaga Catholic Studies program. Crux is proud to recognize Fr. Navone, both for his lifetime of extraordinary work and service and for the singular honor of being publicly identified by the Holy Father as one of his own formative influences.

EXAMINING THE MYTH:
GALILEO AS SCIENTIFIC MARTYR

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The astronomer and mathematician Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) is rightly renowned for his scientific achievements, particularly in astronomy and mechanics. His design improvements to the telescope turned a novel curiosity into a scientific tool, which he himself used to make systematic and detailed observations of the moon, Venus, Sun, and other heavenly bodies, including the moons of Jupiter, which were the basis for a significant part of his early scientific reputation. In a different field, Galileo’s innovation of inclined ramps, which allowed precise measurements of the speed and acceleration of falling bodies, provided the basis for new approaches to the study of physical motion.

Yet Galileo’s scientific significance pales in comparison to his popular characterization as a heroic and revolutionary scientific martyr who stood up to the declining power of the Roman Catholic Church deftly to declare the autonomy of scientific inquiry from theological dogma. According to this oft-told story, Galileo took up the cause of heliocentrism, which had somehow evaded formal Church condemnation since publication of Copernicus’ On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres (1543), and defended that view against the entrenched geocentric (earth-centered) and geostatic (stationary earth) theory articulated by the classical astronomer Ptolemy and integrated into official Christian Church dogma. While Galileo was for some time a geocentrist, his telescopic observations eventually convinced him of the truth of heliocentrism after about 1610, in private and public conversations, in his teaching, and finally in his influential book The Dialogues on the Two Chief World Systems (1632), Galileo risked his scientific reputation and personal safety to articulate and defend Copernicanism. For taking this brave step, Galileo was in 1633 called before the Inquisition and forced to recant his heliocentric views under threat of torture—in deed, some accounts affirm that he was tortured as part of the proceedings.

The Jesuit-educated critic of Christianity Voltaire summed up the significance of the case: “the great Galileo, at the age of fourscore, ground away his days in the dungeons of the Inquisition, because he had demonstrated by irrefutable proofs the motion of the earth.” Versions of this story appear in many in-
Galileo is not a Representative of Science Against Faith, but a Model for the Integration of Faith and Science.
Duke of Tuscany, Cosimo II de Medici, was allowed to stay at the residence of the Tuscan ambassador to Rome. During part of the proceedings, he was housed in the personal apartments of the Inquisition prosecutor. For the entire span of the trial, there are only a few days that the record is unclear about where Galileo was housed. Perhaps he was housed in a prison cell for a few of these days, but such treatment would hardly amount to Voltaire’s “groaning in the dungeons.” It is true that Galileo was sentenced to house arrest by the Inquisition for the final decade of his life, but Church authorities exhibited flexibility in how they interpreted this. For example, the pope allowed Galileo to visit his friend the archbishop of Siena and stay with him for 5 months on his way back home to Florence.

Third, Galileo failed in assembling compelling evidence for heliocentric cosmology, much less proving them with Voltaire’s “irrefutable truths.” His magnum opus on heliocentrism, The Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences, is, as the title indicates, framed as a conversation between friends on the strengths and weaknesses of Ptolemaic geocentrism and Copernican heliocentrism. While Galileo offers a number of arguments against tenets of the Ptolemaic view, such as the notion that the heavens are of a qualitatively different and perfect kind from the sublunar realm, Galileo’s arguments in favor of heliocentrism are probabilistic and speculative. Galileo regarded his most compelling argument for heliocentrism to be that the rotation of the earth on its axis along with its orbit around the sun provided the best explanation for the motion of the tides. In making this claim, Galileo rejected the theory of astronomer Johannes Kepler, who linked the tides to the rotational pattern of the moon around the earth. Of course, Kepler was right and Galileo wrong about the tides. So much for Galileo’s “irrefutable proofs” of heliocentrism.

Fourth, despite the implication that Galileo was a scientist fighting against the Church, it is worth noting that Galileo regarded himself throughout the trial, and to the end of his life, as a good Catholic. The Galileo case therefore is not an instance of the Catholic Church opposing someone outside of its proper jurisdiction. It is an internal dispute between Catholics about how to reconcile a scientific theory with the teachings of the Church. Related to this is the point just addressed: the dispute was not between scientific assertions on the one side (Galileo’s), and bare theological assertions on the other (by the Church). It had rather to do with the impact of scientific claims on interpretation of the Bible, and therefore with a complex mix of empirical evidence for the scientific theory and theological issues about biblical interpretation. Galileo himself was engaged in a project to show the compatibility of scientific discoveries and Christian doctrines. As such, the case demonstrates that Galileo is not a representative of science against faith, but a model for the integration of faith and science, as Pope Benedict XVI noted in a homily in 2009.

Galileo was therefore not martyred by the Catholic Church for advocating heliocentrism. Of course, it is still true that Galileo was found guilty of “vehement suspicion of heresy” and forced to recant, and his book barred from publication. It is further true that the Vatican took centuries to acknowledge formally that heliocentrism is the most reasonable cosmological model for the planetary system of which earth is a part, and that admissions of wrongdoing in the Galileo case by Church officials have dribbled out in small doses, including as recently as Benedict’s final address as pope to the clergy of Rome on February 14, 2013. Why did the Church treat Galileo in the way it did? Does this indicate general opposition to scientific research, or the assertions of faith against scientific reason?

The short answer is “no.” No single institution in the late medieval and early modern periods provided more funding for scientific research, and sponsored the work of so many working scientists, than the Catholic Church. At no time did this project of scientific research exist in a theological vacuum. But in Galileo’s time the theological challenges of the Reformation complicated the Church’s response to scientific activity. The question of scriptural interpretation, and the related question of who was qualified to interpret scripture, was particularly volatile in this context. And yet central to Galileo’s defense of heliocentrism was an argument about scriptural interpretation. Moreover, Galileo further exacerbated the controversy by presenting the views of defenders of the Ptolemaic system, in a book ostensibly offering a neutral review of the competing theories, in the mouth of a rather clumsy and simple-minded interlocutor. For good measure, he named the character Simplicio—“simple-minded,” as one might translate it—and it did not help that the views so described sounded rather like those of Urban VIII himself. So there is no doubt that the Church’s response was defensive. Further, there is some evidence that Galileo’s decision to publish the Dialogues was regarded as an aggravated offense because of his agreement with Bellarmine in 1616 not to hold, teach, or defend Copernicanism; though there is some historical controversy about exactly what status this “agreement” had and how binding it was on Galileo. In short, the Church erred; but its error was more political-theological than it was anti-scientific. It was a mistake for the Church to interfere with the disciplinary competence of the science of astronomy, the claims of which must be decided by the appropriate sorts of astronomical evidence. The Church did not live up to its general standard of support for science in Galileo’s case, but the idea that Galileo was persecuted for doing science is untenable.
THE BACKPAGES

This issue is dedicated
in memory of
Virginia P. Soto

Her Catholic faith was at the center of her life. At 3 pm—the hour our LORD gave up His spirit—and at 3 am daily, she would retreat to her bedroom and transport herself in prayer to the foot of the Cross. Her devout practice of prayer and example of humility are a constant inspiration.

Here is the issue that you eagerly asked about, the one you never got to see. I pray that you are able to see it now, but above all, I pray that this issue is pleasing to our LORD.

May her soul
and the souls of the faithful departed
rest in peace. Amen.

SOURCES / FURTHER READING for the GALILEO ARTICLE: