

Though it may seem an unlikely location to happen upon a conference on astrobiology, the Vatican recently held a “study week” of over 30 astronomers, biologists, geologists and religious leaders to discuss the question of the existence of extraterrestrials. This follows the [statement made last year](#) by the Pope’s chief astronomer, Father Gabriel Funes, that the existence of extraterrestrials does not preclude a belief in God, and that it’s a question to be explored by the Catholic Church. The event, put on by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, took place at the Casina Pio IV on the Vatican grounds from November 6-11.

The conference was meant to focus on the scientific perspective on the subject of the existence of extraterrestrial life, and pulled in perspectives from atheist scientists and Catholic leaders alike. It was split into eight different segments, starting with a topics about life here on Earth such as the origins of life, the Earth’s habitability through time, and the environment and genomes. Then the detection of life elsewhere, search strategies for extrasolar planets, the formation and properties of extrasolar planets was discussed, culminating in the last segment, intelligence elsewhere and ‘shadow life’ – life with a biochemistry completely different than that found on Earth.

Speakers at the event included notable physicist [Paul Davies](#) and Jill C. Tarter, the Director of the Center for SETI Research. Numerous astrobiologists and astronomers researching extrasolar planets also were in attendance to give lectures. The whole series of speech abstracts and a list of participants is available in a brochure on the Vatican site, [here](#).

The event was held to mark the [International Year of Astronomy](#), and the participants hope to collect the lectures into a book. Father Gabriel Funes, the chief astronomer of the Vatican, said in an interview to the Vatican paper, *Osservatore Romano* last year:

“Just like there is an abundance of creatures on earth, there could also be other beings, even intelligent ones, that were created by God. That doesn’t contradict our faith, because we cannot put boundaries to God’s creative freedom. As saint Francis would say, when we consider the earthly creatures to be our “brothers and sisters”, why couldn’t we also talk about a “extraterrestrial brother”? He would still be part of creation.”

Even with the discovery of over 400 exoplanets, the question of extraterrestrial life still remains to be answered in our own Solar System. It is a pertinent question for the religious and non-religious alike. Though it wasn’t answered at this most recent conference, the existence of life outside what we know here on Earth has an equal impact on the findings of science as it does the meaning of religion. This event certainly brought the two under the same roof for what were surely some interesting and fruitful conversations.

Source: [Physorg](#), [Pontifical Academy of Sciences](#)

📄 **ASTROBIOLOGY, ASTRONOMY**

ASTROBIOLOGY, THE VATICAN

39 Replies to “Vatican Holds Conference on Extraterrestrial Life”

Comments are closed.

PREVIOUS

← **Good News for Science News**

NEXT

Stunning Cassini Image to Knock Your Socks Off →

[Privacy Policy](#) / Proudly powered by [WordPress](#)



Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development



Store and/or access information on a device

How can I change my choice?

What if I don't consent?

How does legitimate interest work?

Do I have to consent to everything?

Your personal data will be processed and information from your device (cookies, unique identifiers, and other device data) may be stored by, accessed by and shared with 134 TCF vendor(s) and 64 ad partner(s), or used specifically by this site or app.

Some vendors may process your personal data on the basis of legitimate interest, which you can object to by managing your options below. Look for a link at the bottom of this page to manage or withdraw consent in privacy and cookie settings.

Consent

Do not consent

Manage options