



FINDING GOD IN THE STARS

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SOME Jesuits have wanted to be priests since they were boys, but that was not the case for me. Although my Christian faith has always been important to me, it was not until I was doing a doctorate in physics in the United States that I sensed that God might want me to enter religious life. This new idea was unexpected to me, so I went to talk to a Jesuit priest I knew and began seriously discerning a religious vocation.

As I spent the next three years finishing my Ph.D., it became clearer and clearer to me that consecrated life was the best way I could put my gifts and my desires at the service of God and his Church. I had never felt that I would be completely fulfilled in a traditional, full-time academic career as a layman, and now I saw that God was leading me on a path that was closer to my heart. I was well aware that the Society of Jesus has not only a strong history of missionary work, especially here in Canada, but is also academically engaged in all kinds of fields, so that becoming a Jesuit would not necessarily mean completely leaving my nine years of postsecondary studies behind. The vocation director I was in touch with told me that he couldn't promise me how my education would be used but that it would be put to use somehow. 'It would be stupid not to use the training that a man

brings to the Society,' he said, 'And I can tell you one thing: we're not stupid!'

Over my almost ten years as a Jesuit, these words have consistently rung true. I have continued with some of my scientific interests during studies, and was able to spend two years in full-time research in the Experimental Cosmology Group at the University of British Columbia (2013–15). During my theology studies in Rome from 2015–18, I became friends with the Jesuit astronomers who work at the Vatican Observatory, a scientific research institute entrusted to the Society of Jesus by the Holy Father.

But my time in religious life has consisted of so much more than just keeping up my scientific research. During my novitiate in Montréal (2009–11), I was privileged to do the month-long Spiritual Exercises retreat, to serve in a soup-kitchen founded by the Grey Nuns in Montréal, to teach catechism at a nearby parish, to live in a L'Arche community in northern Québec and to work at the African Jesuits AIDS Network in Nairobi, Kenya. My philosophy studies through Regis College in Toronto (2011–13) opened up new intellectual vistas for me and sparked an interest in interdisciplinary questions of faith and science. My theology studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (2015–18) gave me the opportunity to deepen my knowledge of scripture and theological tradition in an international environment—and in the Italian language. Other highlights of my for-

mation include a summer in Venezuela improving my Spanish, a month-long time of retreat and pilgrimage in Israel and Palestine, and a summer helping to direct retreats in Brazzaville, Congo.

As I work to finish my Licence in Sacred Theology at Regis College, I look forward to the future apostolates that my superiors entrust to me. I would not be surprised if in the long run my mission is chiefly academic in nature and involves scientific research, which I consider to be a good in and of itself, glorifying God and also contributing to what is best in secular culture. But of additional importance to me is writing and speaking about issues of faith and science, for which there is a true hunger in our culture. On the one hand, many people of faith are seeking to integrate the scientific and technological knowledge of our times with their experience of God; on the other hand, many people who are non-believers or 'seekers' are genuinely interested in hearing how the Church proposes that this integration occur. I hope to contribute to that dialogue.

Finally, any and all of my missions in the Society will now be as an ordained priest. I pray that I might bring consolation to God's people through the sacraments and other priestly ministries, and also find in them consolation for myself. And I pray—and ask you to pray too—that my priesthood will be present in all that I do, for God's greater glory.