

Best position it to trust God

In the May 22 issue, The Catholic Review printed a brief article about the Vatican astronomer saying it's okay to believe in aliens, a position that was criticized in a letter by Louie Verrecchio on May 29. Mr. Verrecchio says that all forms of life are sinful and in need of redemption.

I think Mr. Verrecchio was only talking about intelligent life of the form we know on earth. I don't recall ever being taught that any plant life was sinful (although it wouldn't take much to convince me that the thorny vining weed greenbriar is the work of the devil). But seriously, there are two much more important issues here:

First, we must be humble enough to admit that we humans don't know much, and concede that God may have ways of creating that we cannot possibly imagine. Trying to limit God so that he must "do it my way" is always a mistake.

Second, there is virtually zero chance that we will ever be able to discover aliens if they do exist. Remember that our solar system got organized about 5 billion years ago, after a couple previous generations of stars had exploded and the dust came back together again. Suppose in another galaxy somewhere out there a similar process was taking place, in approximately the same time frame; and suppose further that intelligent life subsequently evolved there too. Maybe our planet is 5.0 billion years old and theirs' is 5.1 billion years. That's a difference of only about 2 percent.

Guess what? We missed them by 100 million years.

Projecting the customs of our very limited human thinking onto cosmic questions is seldom helpful. We know a modest amount about the physics of stars and galaxies, much less about the geology of planets, and for the incredible scope of possible life forms, we haven't a chance. The best position to take is one that trusts that God loves his entire creation, and accepts that God is a whole lot smarter than the rest of us.