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BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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Audience with participants in the meeting organized by the Vatican Observatory

At 10.30 this morning, in the room adjacent to the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the meeting promoted by the Vatican Observatory on the theme: "Black Holes, Gravitational Waves and Space-Time Singularities" (Castelgandolfo, 9-12 May 2017).

The following is the full text of the Pope's greeting to those present:

Holy Father's Greeting

Dear friends, I extend a heartfelt welcome to you all, and I thank Brother Guy Consolmagno for his kind words.

The issues you have been addressing during these days at Castel Gandolfo are of particular interest to the Church, because they have to do with questions that concern us deeply, such as the beginning of the universe and its evolution, and the profound structure of space and time, to name but a few. It is clear that these questions have a particular relevance for science, philosophy, theology and for the spiritual life. They represent an arena in which these different disciplines meet and sometimes clash.

As both a Catholic priest and a cosmologist, Mgr Georges Lemaître knew well the creative tension between faith and science, and always defended the clear methodological distinction between the fields of science and theology. While integrating them in his own life, he viewed them as distinct areas of competence. That distinction, already present in Saint Thomas Aquinas, avoids a short-circuiting that is as harmful to science as it is to faith.

Before the immensity of space-time, we humans can experience awe and a sense of our own insignificance, as the Psalmist reminds us: "What is man that you should keep him in mind, the son of man that you care for him?" (Ps 8:5). As Albert Einstein loved to say: "One may say the eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility". The existence and intelligibility of the universe are not a result of chaos or mere chance, but of God's Wisdom, present "at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old". (Prov 8:22).

I am deeply appreciative of your work, and I encourage you to persevere in your search for truth. For we ought never to fear truth, nor become trapped in our own preconceived ideas, but welcome new scientific discoveries with an attitude of humility. As we journey towards the frontiers of human knowledge, it is indeed possible to have an authentic experience of the Lord, one which is capable of filling our hearts.
