

Find the Ultimate “Human Interest Story”

At Society’s Annual Conference, Probing Nature of Humanity

Inviting Your Coverage at University of Notre Dame, June 7-9, 2019

The world’s leading group of Catholic scientists will hold its third annual conference at the University of Notre Dame on June 7-9, 2019. Distinguished speakers from an array of disciplines will combine a unique set of perspectives to address a question of broad relevance: “*What does it mean to be human?*”

More than 1,000 scholars, striving to combine their diverse doctorate-level expertise in the natural sciences with a lively faith in the Catholic Church, have joined this fast-growing organization, the Society of Catholic Scientists.

Those attending this conference are rigorous practitioners of the scientific method in academia, research and other careers. Valuing both faith and reason, as Catholic tradition has done for two millennia, members are “outside-the-box” thinkers who embrace compelling questions within a context observers may call counter-cultural. That is, their appreciation for science and religion providing enlightenment together opens the door to wide-ranging discussions that will resonate with other scientists and many people with spiritual and practical curiosity.

Please plan to cover this conference, either in-person or via the online streaming of talks. The questions to be asked include: What is human nature, and when did it appear on earth? Can human nature be changed by genetic engineering and other technology? In what ways are humans unique on earth, and are they unique in the cosmos?

Both the conference and the Society of Catholic Scientists themselves are focused on strictly apolitical and non-partisan discussions, while they take note of areas where values intersect with sciences’ contributions to progress in everyday life and understanding for the common good.

At its annual conferences, the Society presents the St. Albert the Great Award to a Catholic scientist whose life and work give witness to the harmony that exists between the vocation of the scientist and the life of faith.



The 2019 St. Albert the Great Award will be presented to Maureen L. Condic, associate professor of neurobiology at the University of Utah. A featured speaker at the upcoming conference, this award-winning author and appointee to the National Science Board has taught human embryology in the University of Utah School of Medicine for 20 years. The Society will honor her strong, public defense—on scientific and philosophical grounds—for the human status of embryos.

See more information about Prof. Condic and her scheduled talk below. The St. Albert the Great Award is named for the Church’s patron saint of natural scientists.

While the Society’s members are all scientists, the speaker list represents an even broader spectrum—from bioengineering, paleoanthropology and medical research to theology, philosophy and award-winning writing of science fiction. The points of view, going deeper than statistical insights alone; can provide fresh story ideas and thought-provoking commentary for journalists and opinion-leaders on the science and religion beats.

See the [lineup of speakers](#) and their biographies at the [Society’s website](#), which also describes this multidisciplinary organization. The conference is hosted by the University of Notre Dame’s [McGrath Institute for Church Life](#), to which the Society wishes to express its gratitude.



To learn more in preparation for your coverage, either on campus or online, contact the Society's president, [Stephen M. Barr](#) (Ph.D., Physics, 1978, Princeton University). He is a professor of theoretical particle physics and cosmology in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Delaware and a Fellow of the American Physical Society. Barr is the author of *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2003). Find more biographical details [here](#), and meet the entire board of directors [here](#).

For more information to facilitate coverage, contact: [Bill Schmitt](#), media consultant, at bschmitt@alumni.princeton.edu.

For an audio podcast with an interview of Prof. Barr and an overview of conference, click on episodes 59, 60 and 61 of "That's So Second Millennium" at <http://thatssosecondmillennium.net>.



Maureen L. Condic, this year's recipient of the Society's St. Albert the Great Award, received her doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley. She holds both the [Basil O'Connor Award](#) and the [McKnight Award](#). She is currently a member of the Vatican's Pontifical Academy for Life, with a strong interest in bioethics. Condic co-authored *Human Embryos, Human Beings*, and her book *Untangling Twinning* (forthcoming in 2019) considers the biological and philosophical issues raised by human twinning.

May 28, 2019

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