## Letter to the Editor



Dear Sir:

Religion can be both frustrating and amusing. Some Protestant groups, with frightful fervor, resist the science of biology and geology. There is nothing more criminal to education than the Christian Right that dominates the Texas State Board of Education. They sabotage science and history in school textbooks by dismissing evolution and Thomas Jefferson.

But neither is the foolishness of religion without humor. The Church finally gave Copernicus a proper Catholic funeral mass after banning him for several centuries. He died in 1543, almost 470 years ago. The Church embraced him (and his work) in May of 2010. The Catholic Church is outrun only by snails and glaciers. Guadalajara is more advanced, having long celebrated Copernicus by naming a city street after him.

I rejoice that I have lived long enough to see Copernicus given a proper Catholic funeral celebration. His own patience in this was no doubt helped by his understanding of the movements of celestial bodies.

Written by \*

Copernicus had been restless in an unmarked place. DNA testing of his bones matched a lock of his hair that had been left in a book, thus providing positive identity. His resting place is now beneath the floor of a cathedral in Poland, after his remains were blessed with holy water by the highest-ranking clergy of that country. There was an honor guard for the mass. A black granite tombstone now identifies him as the founder of the heliocentric theory. The tombstone is decorated with a golden sun encircled by six planets, no doubt those of which he was aware in his time. Oh, and they include the Earth.

The Church interpreted Holy Scripture to place the Earth and human beings in the center of the universe, with the Sun revolving around the Earth. Copernicus died two months after his work was published, so he avoided a heresy trial. The Church placed his work on their list of forbidden books, however.

Galileo came along and continued the work of Copernicus, and was tried for heresy. He recanted and thereby escaped burning at the stake, but he was put under house arrest for the rest of his life.

Galileo was rehabilitated in 1992 by Pope John Paul II when he acknowledged that the Church had erred in condemning Galileo for asserting that the Earth revolves around the Sun. Now Copernicus has finally got his turn at rehabilitation, and after so many centuries, it's not likely that either Galileo or Copernicus would quibble over the 18 years difference in their restoration to Catholic respectability. But I privately wonder whether in the intervening centuries their souls have not switched to the Lutheran side.

The Church has now advanced from its hoary and venerable theology to agree with the heliocentric theory, meaning that the Sun is the center of the universe. The Republican Party is divided by an internal struggle over which of them is conservative enough. When it comes to conservative values, Republicans would do well to take a lesson from the Catholic Church.

Fred Mittag

Villas de San Pablo