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Rev. William R. Stoeger, S.J. (1943-2014)

Resident of Los Gatos

Rev. William R. Stoeger, S.J., astronomer at the Vatican Observatory, died March 24, 2014 in Regis Infirmary, Sacred Heart Jesuit Center, Los Gatos, CA, after a struggle with cancer. He was 70 years old and had been a member of the Society of Jesus for 52 years.

Bill was born in Torrance, CA May 10, 1943. He grew up in Redondo Beach and after graduation from Bishop Montgomery High School he entered the Jesuit Order at Los Gatos in 1961. His studies took him to Spring Hill College, Mobile, UCLA, and Cambridge University, England, where, working with Stephen Hawking and colleagues, he received his Ph.D. in Astrophysics. After postdoctoral work in gravitational physics at the University of Maryland, Bill joined the staff of the Vatican Observatory. Based primarily in Tucson, AZ, Bill also served as adjunct associate professor at the University of Arizona.

Bill's expertise was theoretical cosmology, high-energy astrophysics and interdisciplinary studies relating science and religion. He investigated the physics of black holes, mathematical issues of theories of gravity, and the origin of the universe, among other issues. He had the knack of explaining the theoretical concepts he was dealing with in laymen's terms, often using hand drawn diagrams and spidery writing on transparencies. (In more recent times, his use of PowerPoint was greatly appreciated by his audiences.) He was a real scholar who had a gift and passion for talking with people about matters of faith and science. He had a wry and gentle humor, was always self-effacing but not afraid to speak the hard truth.

In addition to being a renowned scientist, Bill was a dedicated priest. After studies at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, he was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1972, along with his brother, Jack, a priest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. He assisted at various parishes in the Tucson diocese and was sought after as a retreat presenter and spiritual director.

Bill is survived by his brother, Rev. Jack Stoeger, of Los Angeles, and a sister, Rosemary Bruscano, of Carrollton, Texas.

Mass of Christian Burial will be held Friday, March 28, 10:00 a.m. at Sacred Heart Jesuit Center, 300 College Avenue, Los Gatos, 95030, with burial immediately afterward at Santa Clara Mission Cemetery, 490 Lincoln Street, Santa Clara 95050.

Donations in memory of Fr. Stoeger may be made to the California Province of the Society of Jesus, P.O. Box 68, Los Gatos, CA 95031 or to a charity of your choosing.