Pope: Scientists also can arrive at sanctity
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Pope dedicates General Audience to Saint Albert the Great on faith and reason
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St. Albert the Great: No Contrast Between Faith and Science

VATICAN CITY, 24 MAR 2010 (VIS) -

In today's general audience, celebrated in St. Peter's Square, the Pope turned his attention to St. Albert the Great, whom he described as "one of the greatest masters of scholastic theology".

The saint, who was born in Germany at the beginning of the thirteenth century, "studied what were known as the 'liberal arts': grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music; in other words, general culture, and he diplayed that typical interest for the natural sciences which would soon become his chosen field of specialisation".

He entered the Order of Preachers and, following his ordination as a priest, had the opportunity to complete his theological studies at the most famous university of his age, Paris. From there he went to Cologne, taking Thomas Aquinas with him, his own "outstanding student". Pope Alexander IV made use of Albert's theological counsel, and subsequently appointed him as bishop of Regensburg.

Albert, recalled the Holy Father, "contributed to the 1274 Council of Lyon, called by Pope Gregory X to favour the unification of the Latin and Greek Churches following their separation in the great Eastern Schism of 1054. He clarified the ideas of Thomas Aquinas, who had been the subject of entirely unjustified objections and even condemnations".

The German saint died in Cologne in the year 1280, and was canonised and proclaimed a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius XI in 1931, "undoubtedly an appropriate recognition for this great man of God" who was also "an outstanding scholar, not only of the truth of faith but in many other fields of knowledge". For this reason too, "Pope Pius XII named him as patron of the natural sciences, also giving him the title of 'Doctor universalis' because of the vastness of his interests and knowledge".

"Above all, St. Albert shows that there is no opposition between faith and science. ... He reminds us that there is friendship between science and faith, and that scientists can, through their vocation to study nature, follow an authentic and absorbing path of sanctity", said the Holy Father.

"St. Albert the Great opened the door to the complete acceptance of the thought of Aristotle into the philosophy and theology of the Middle Ages, an acceptance that was later definitively elaborated by St. Thomas Aquinas. This acceptance of what we may call pagan or pre-Christian philosophy was an authentic cultural revolution for the time. Yet many Christian thinkers feared Aristotle's philosophy", especially as it had been interpreted in such a was as to appear "entire

irreconcilable with Christian faith. Thus a dilemma arose: are faith and reason in contrast with one another or not?

"Here lies one of the great merits of St. Albert: he rigorously studied the works of Aristotle, convinced that anything that is truly reasonable is compatible with faith as revealed in Sacred Scripture", the Pope added.

"St. Albert was able to communicate these concepts in a simple and understandable way. A true son of St. Dominic, he readily preached to the people of God who were won over by his words and the example of his life".

The Pope concluded his catechesis by asking God "that the holy Church may never lack learned, pious and wise theologians like St. Albert the Great, and that He may help each of us to accept the 'formula for sanctity' which Albert followed in his own life: 'Wanting everything I want for the glory of God just as, for His glory, God wants everything He wants'. In other words, we must always conform ourselves to the will of God in order to want and do everything always and only for His glory".