On February 24, 2012, the Vatican Observatory Foundation honored friends and benefactors who have so generously supported the work of the Vatican Observatory over time. Each year as donors reach a certain lifetime giving level, they achieve a Circle of Giving designation and are recognized and thanked publicly by the President and Board of Directors as well as their fellow benefactors and friends. Each Circle of Giving is named in honor of one of the exceptional individuals connected with astronomy, the Society of Jesus and the Vatican Observatory. At this year’s dinner four honorees were present to receive awards from Foundation President Fr. Albert J. DiUlio, S.J., and Board Chairman, Richard J. Friedrich. They included Bill Ahmanson of The Ahmanson Foundation; Marianne Augustine; Peter Moore of the Pacific Western Foundation; and Dan Cracchiolo of The Steele Foundation, whose award was accepted by his sister, Rose Collins. This recognition is a small token of our profound gratitude and appreciation. Without the loyal support of these wonderful people and all those who give generously to the VOF, we would not be able to sustain programs that represent the Church in the world of science. Thank you!

DID YOU KNOW?

German Jesuit Christoph Clavius’s viewing of the total solar eclipse of 1560 made him decide that astronomy would be his life’s work? He went on to write numerous textbooks and was the senior mathematician on the commission for the reform of the calendar in 1582. The Vatican Observatory Foundation recognizes his contribution to the field by welcoming benefactors of $10,000 to the Christoph Clavius Circle of Giving.
Spring has sprung and what passes for a Tucson winter has faded into memories. The cacti are in bloom, the roses are up and the air is full of the marvelous fragrances of the newly awakened earth. The inspiration of the Resurrection and the gifts of the Spirit urge us forward with light and life.

The Vatican Observatory Foundation is experiencing this new spring in many ways as well. For us it is a transition to new leadership after the departure of Fr. Coyne for Syracuse, NY and LeMoyne College. His dedicated and brilliant leadership over almost three decades brought both funding and recognition to the Vatican Observatory and its flagship telescope, the Vatican Advanced Technology Telescope. Like many wonderful organizations we now must continue to build on his vital and excellent work.

As the scientists of the Vatican Observatory continue to explore God’s grand universe and unlock more of its mysteries and challenges, the VOF continues to seek ever more and different ways to fund their work. The VATT is not, as you know, funded by the Vatican but solely by the Vatican Observatory Foundation. Your continued help and support is vital to our efforts and we thank you profusely for that effort. In no other arena can you share in the vital work of understanding and exploring the fullness of God’s creation.

God bless!

**Br. Guy Travels**

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII established the Vatican Observatory “that everyone might see clearly that the Church and her Pastors are not opposed to true and solid science … but that they embrace it, encourage it, and promote it.” Thus our task at the Vatican Observatory is twofold: to do the science, and to show the world what we do. One way this second task is done is with public and classroom lectures. Br. Guy Consolmagno, in his role as coordinator for public relations at the Specola, is one of the busiest lecturers on the Vatican Observatory Staff and regularly takes month-long trips to present talks about the Observatory and its work. This past winter, he traveled to North America and over a period of six weeks gave more than 30 public presentations in various locations.
On March 9, the exhibition “Storie Dall’Altro Mondo”—Stories from Another World—opened in Pisa, Italy. It’s a beautifully crafted show of astronomical photos, meteorite samples (including pieces of the Moon and Mars), modern artifacts, historical instruments and books, and interactive educational experiences. But two things in particular make this exhibit stand out from other astronomy shows.

First, it is being co-sponsored by an interesting group of collaborators, including the Vatican Observatory; the Italian National Institute of Nuclear Physics; the Department of Physics at the University of Pisa; and the Archdiocese of Pisa. In conjunction with this interesting mix of scientific and religious institutions, there is a special connection to these themes. For in fact, this is not the first time that such diverse elements have been found together in Pisa. Indeed all of them coexisted in the life of Pietro Cardinal Maffi.

Cardinal Maffi served as the archbishop of Pisa in the early 20th century, but he was also a scientist and a historian of science. Famously, he proposed that a statue should be raised in Pisa to honor Galileo, its most famous astronomical son. (This proposal was turned down by the city, apparently for political reasons.) We remember Cardinal Maffi at the Specola in his role as president of the Vatican Observatory during its formative years. He was responsible for bringing Fr. Johann Hagen, S.J. from Georgetown University to be its director, the first Jesuit to hold that post.

Maffi’s life is celebrated at the exhibition with letters and writings on matters both religious and scientific. Among the displays is a book on Chinese astronomy and geography that he received from friends in China which may be the work of the famous Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci.

The theme of the exhibition is “the universe within and without us.” When the Vatican Observatory’s role in this exhibition was first announced, Fr. José Funes made special note of the connection between the universal and the particular. “The history of the universe could not be told without our ‘small’ human stories,” he said. “Cardinal Maffi lived a dual existence: the world of the Church and that of science… in the search for the deeper meaning of human existence.”

Fr. George Coyne, S.J., gave a lecture at Chicago’s prestigious Adler Planetarium in November 2011 and was joined by VOF board member Sunny Chico (left), her husband Gery Chico (far right), and Adler President Dr. Paul Knappenberger (inner right).

Jesuit provincials from Africa visited Castel Gandolfo in April 2012.
To continue a longstanding tradition of sharing information about the research being done at the Vatican Observatory, the VOF organized a seminar in Los Angeles with two presentations. Fr. José G. Funes, S.J., Director of the Vatican Observatory, presented “Vatican Observatory Research: Today,” giving an excellent, informative and entertaining summary of the current staff’s work. Then Br. Guy Consolmagno, S.J., Curator of the Vatican Observatory meteorite collection and Planetary Scientist, presented “Exotic Dust, Exotic Moons and Exoplanets” demonstrating his vast knowledge and expertise in this area. These lectures were followed by quite a few questions from the well-informed audience. Our thanks to Loyola High School for allowing us to have this event and the VOF annual board meeting on their campus.
Circles of Giving Awards Dinner

Breaking with tradition, this was the first year the awards celebration took place outside Tucson, Arizona, and the first year the event was presided over by the new President, Fr. Albert J. DiUlio, S.J. It was also the perfect occasion to honor Fr. George V. Coyne, S.J., who retired from the observatory at the end of 2011 and who graciously made the trek to the west coast from his new teaching position at LeMoyne College in Syracuse, New York. Fr. José G. Funes, S.J., Directory of the Vatican Observatory, presented Fr. Coyne with the Holy Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice award. One of the highest honors given to clergy and religious, the cross is awarded for distinguished service to the Holy Father and the Catholic Church. The Board of Directors of the VOF also honored Fr. Coyne’s long service to the organization by giving him a new laptop computer and showing a short film depicting much of his life from the Maryland novitiate through the many years at the observatory and the foundation. We all wish him well.
In October 2011, I made my second visit to China. I was very excited to participate as invited speaker at the III Galileo-Xu Quangqi meeting in Beijing. Organized by ICRANET (a network of scientific institutions of which the Vatican Observatory is part), the idea was to celebrate the science of the East and the West through the work of two eminent scientific figures: Galileo for the West and Xu Quangqi for the East.

Xu Quangqi was a Chinese scientist of the seventeenth century, and a close friend and collaborator of the great Jesuit missionary and scientist Fr. Matteo Ricci, S.J. Fr. Ricci introduced western science in China through the translation into Chinese of the critical edition of the *Euclid Elements* of the Jesuit mathematician Fr. Christopher Clavius, S.J. (This year also celebrates the 400th anniversary of the death of Fr. Clavius). The meeting attracted a vast audience of international scholars in astrophysics and the topics discussed were quite broad—from Observational Astronomy to Quantum Gravity.

A moving moment of the conference occurred when all participants took part in the ceremony in which Prof. Remo Ruffini, Director of ICRANET, laid flowers on the tomb of Fr. Matteo Ricci, S.J., who died in 1610. This marked an exciting moment for me, especially from a spiritual point of view. Since my novitiate, I have been fascinated by the apostolic work of Fr. Ricci, and especially his ability to use science as a medium for evangelization. And there I stood at his grave, admiring the inscriptions on his tomb, both in Latin and Chinese!

During my trip, I also visited the Forbidden City in Beijing and viewed astronomical instruments and tools which belonged to the Jesuit missionaries and astronomers Fr. Adam Schall S.J. and Fr. Ferdinand Vierbiest, S.J. Fr. Vierbiest succeeded Fr. Ricci in the Jesuit mission in China. Also memorable was my visit to the Old Beijing Astronomical Observatory to see its impressive collection of antique astronomical instruments.
IAU in China

In August 2012 China will for the first time host the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union in Beijing. This triennial gathering of astronomers from around the world to discuss and debate the most recent discoveries about the universe is an important part of the vitality of the field. The Vice Director for the Vatican Observatory Research Group (VORG), Fr. Christopher Corbally, S.J. and four other staff members of the Vatican Observatory will attend the two-week long meeting, making presentations, sharing research results and participating in discussions. As National Representative for Vatican City, Fr. Corbally will also vote in the General Assembly.

Experience the Wonders of China
on a 13-day Ignatian Pilgrimage

Join us on an exciting tour of historical Jesuit sites in China, where you’ll come to experience the wonders of this fascinating part of the world. We’ll be staying in five-star hotels in several cities, including Beijing, Xi’an, Xiamen and Shanghai. Co-leading the tour will be Fr. Jerry Martinson, S.J., Jenny Go and Fr. Albert DiUlio, S.J. The vice president of Kuangchi Program Services, Fr. Martinson has spent years in Asia creating and producing videos and articles on the culture and history of the region. Go is the former secretary of education for the Jesuit Conference of East Asia and the Pacific. Fr. DiUlio is the newly appointed president of the Vatican Observatory Foundation.

Historical places of interest include:
The Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, North Cathedral of Beijing, Tomb of Jesuit Matteo Ricci, Great Wall of China, Terra Cotta Army, She Shan Basilica and many other places

For information or to reserve your spot, please visit:
www.jesuitscalifornia.org/chinatrip
katie@vaticanobservatory.org
An Orbital Perspective

The VOF was honored to have NASA astronaut Nicole Passonno Stott address friends and benefactors gathered for the Circles of Giving dinner. Watching and listening to Nicole’s first hand videos and photos from her time in space, the crowd was utterly fascinated.

“I consider myself blessed to have had the opportunity to see our planet from the vantage point of low Earth orbit,” Nicole said. “And I’m really thankful to be here tonight to share some of the perspective I’ve gained from my time on the International Space Station and how I believe the work of the Vatican Observatory and that of NASA are very complimentary.”

Nicole regaled the audience with her experience in space, and her impressions of Earth as seen from above. Further, she shared some of her own thoughts about the beautiful and remarkable world in which we live.

“A couple of statements from the Vatican Observatory mission stand out to me in particular,” she said. “These include, ‘To increase our understanding of the wonder and beauty of the universe God has given us’ and ‘a great reminder of the majesty and awe of the universe...and of the important dialogue between faith and science.’”

Nicole and her husband, Chris, have been friends and supporters of the observatory for several years, and we thank them for sharing their story and their generosity with us.