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Vatican conference discusses extraterrestrial life and its implications for Catholic theology

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Four hundred years after it put astronomer Galileo under house arrest for challenging the view that the Earth was the center of the universe, the Vatican has called in experts to study the possibility of extraterrestrial life and its implications, if discovered, for the Catholic church.

"The questions of life's origins and of whether life exists elsewhere in our universe are very suitable and deserve serious consideration," said Jesuit Fr. Jose Gabriel Funes, director of the Vatican Observatory. Funes presented the results Nov. 10 of a five-day conference that gathered astronomers, physicists, biologists and other experts to discuss the new field of astrobiology -- the study of the origin of life and its existence elsewhere in the universe. See Catholic News Service story

For more on the discussion of the discovery of extraterrestrial life and intelligence and the implications of such a discovery on Catholic theology, see my feature story "Looking for company beyond the skies" which appeared in the Oct. 20, 2006 NCR. Looking for company beyond the skies

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