Modern physics has learned that under conditions of enormous pressure, the nuclei of hydrogen atoms can fuse into helium and in the process give off remarkable amounts of energy. This energy was first predicted by Einstein’s famous equation, \( E = mc^2 \). It is the source of the energy that makes the sun and the stars shine. And it is the power behind hydrogen bombs.

You don’t have to reject Einstein’s physics to pray that nuclear warfare never occurs. But it’s easy to confuse the science of how the universe works with the technology developed from that knowledge. And technology itself is different from the purposes, good or bad, to which it is directed… including the inevitable, unexpected consequences of technology that is used even with the best of intentions.

When we study biology we come close to God, the Creator of all living things. The miracle of life includes not only the fact that life itself exists but the amazing truth that we, ourselves God’s living creations, have been given the ability to understand life and cultivate it. We have the power to cure disease and alleviate suffering. We also have the freedom to abuse that power, using it for selfish ends or withholding it from others out of greed or malice.

Advances in the biological sciences lead to advances in medical technology. But as profound as the efforts of the scientists and doctors is to make those advances, the philosophers, ethicists, and theologians exert a similar effort when they seek to understand that knowledge, how to use it wisely and deal with its consequences. They, too, are under enormous pressures; and they, too, will not always get it right.

They deserve our attention, and our prayers

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[Leader] Daily offering prayer: O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer You my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, and the reunion of all Christians. I offer them for the intentions of our bishops and of all Apostles of Prayer, and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month—

MARCH: For a Christian response to bioethical challenges. We pray for Christians facing new bioethical challenges; may they continue to defend the dignity of all human life with prayer and action.

Grace: We pray for a Christian response to the bioethical challenges of our day. May the Holy Spirit guide all of us, and especially medical professionals, towards ethical decisions that respect the dignity of the human person.

[Reader 1] Scripture: “Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth. God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:26-27)

[Reader 2] Quote: “We know that the threshold of basic respect for human life is being crossed, and brutally at that, not only by instances of individual conduct but also by the effects of societal choices and structures. Business strategies and the pace of technological growth now, as never before, condition biomedical research, educational priorities, investment decisions and the quality of interpersonal relationships. The possibility of directing economic development and scientific progress towards the covenant between man and woman, towards caring for our common humanity and towards the dignity of the human person, surely arises from a love for creation that faith helps us to deepen and illuminate. The prospect of a global bioethics, with a broad vision and a concern for the impact of the environment on life and health, offers a significant opportunity for strengthening the new covenant between the Gospel and creation.” (Pope Francis, Letter to the President of the Pontifical Academy for Life)

[Leader] Reflection questions: With rapidly changing medical and bio-technology, the world is confronted with new challenges to human dignity, but also new opportunities to promote human life. What are some of the challenges and opportunities that you see in the world? How are you called to respond to these developments? [All: take 1 min in quiet reflection; 2 min to journal; and then share a with the group]