

Respond

Galileo's Daughter

Galileo Galilei was worried, maybe even afraid, and so was his daughter. It was 1633. The famous astronomer had been ordered to appear before the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Rome. Like any Catholic who drew the attention of the Inquisition court, Galileo was being investigated for actions that church officials believed went against the teachings of the Church. Galileo held the belief that the earth revolved around the sun. The Catholic Church did not. Galileo's daughter, Sister Maria Celeste, was aware of the dangers that awaited her father in Rome. During the months that her father spent in Rome, Sister Celeste wrote many letters to him, reassuring him and reminding him to place his trust in God.



Fresco of Galileo standing before the pope (detail), 1841

Most Beloved Lord Father,

Signor Geri informed me of the conditions imposed on you on account of your affair, Sire, that alas you are detained in the chambers of the Holy Office; on the one hand this gives me great distress... on the other hand... I console myself and cling to the expectation of a happy and prosperous triumph, with the help of blessed God, to Whom my heart never ceases to cry out....

The only thing for you to do now is to guard your good spirits, taking care not to jeopardize your health with excessive worry, but to direct your thoughts and hopes to God, Who, like a tender, loving father, never abandons those who confide in Him and appeal to Him for help in time of need....

From San Matteo, the 20th day of April 1633

Most affectionate daughter,

S.M. Celeste

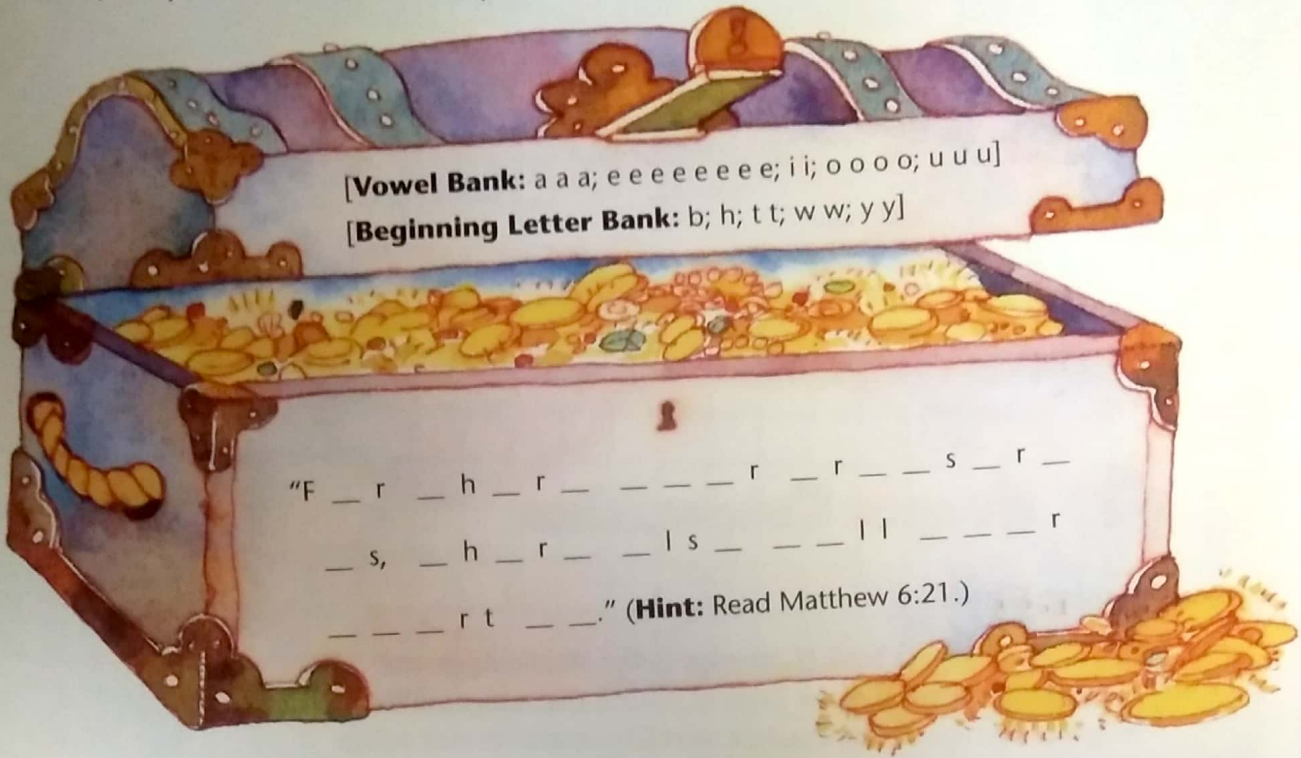
Sister Celeste's own life was not an easy one. Life in a convent was supposed to be difficult. A lack of material things was supposed to free the sisters to know God better. Sister Celeste's letters to her father show that she thrived in this environment. What makes her story even more interesting is that she had been placed in the convent by her father. Life in a convent was a substitute for marriage for many daughters from upper-class families.

Activities

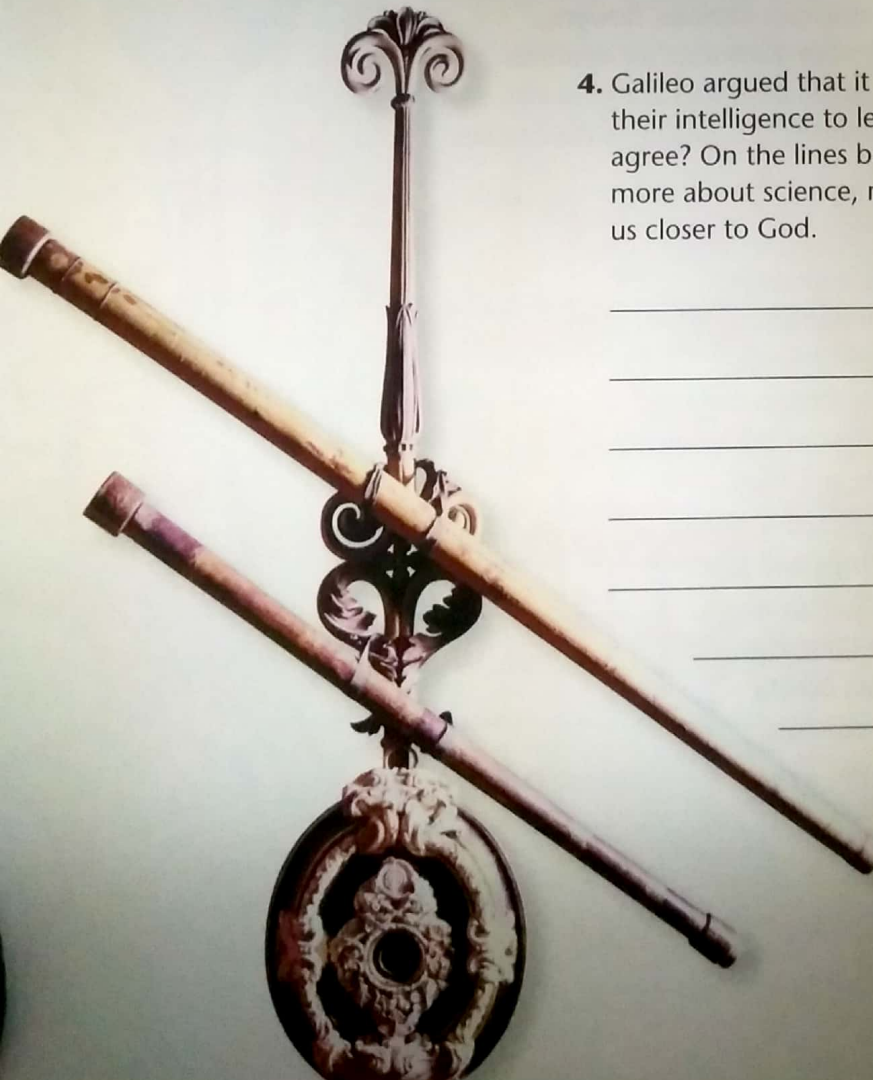
1. Sister Celeste advised her father not to worry, but to trust God. When would that advice have helped you? To whom would you give the same advice?

2. Today we know that Galileo was right: The earth revolves around the sun. The Catholic Church has acknowledged that Galileo's observations were correct. Do you think that admitting Galileo was right weakened or strengthened the Catholic Church? Why?

3. The Gospel of Christ teaches that financial riches and material possessions should not be the most important part of our lives. Instead, we should focus on getting to know and love God better. Using the letters in the vowel bank and the beginning letter bank below, complete the statement from Jesus.



4. Galileo argued that it is God's will that people use their intelligence to learn more about creation. Do you agree? On the lines below, tell how you think learning more about science, nature, art, or medicine can bring us closer to God.



This is a telescope used by Galileo.

How do we praise God through prayer?