Blessed Nicolas Steno

The Steno Institute is named after Blessed Nicolas Steno (Steensen in Danish, Stensen in English) the 17th century Danish scientist, physician and bishop. He was a truly gifted person who used his talents and abilities to further the understanding of many areas of science as well as theology. Faith and reason were not at odds in his mind.

Blessed Nicolas is considered the father of modern geology. He discovered laws and principles that explain why rock sedimentation occurs as it does in nature. Additionally, he made ground-breaking discoveries in anatomy, medicine and paleontology before turning his attention to philosophy and theology.

When he did dedicate himself to theology, he gave up his scientific pursuits. He eventually was made a bishop and was known for his piety.

Blessed Nicolas was commemorated with a Google doodle on the occasion of his 374th birthday. He was the first to describe the heart as a muscular organ. All of us carry his name since we each have two salivary gland ducts in our cheeks, which he first described, and which are called ducts of Steno (or Stensen's ducts).

He wrote that he refused to accept all information in books at face value; instead he chose to research matters himself. This drive to seek truth, and not uncritically accept what the scientific community has proclaimed as orthodoxy, inspires us to promote unbiased research supporting the dignity of human life.

Blessed Nicolas set a superb example in his life by honoring the dignity of the least of our brothers. He was reportedly ridiculed because of his austere lifestyle as a bishop, including selling his episcopal ring and cross to raise money for the poor.