

Wed., 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020**To all members of our International English-Speaking Community of the Parish of Luxembourg Notre-Dame**

We carry on reading step by step “*The Mass on the World*” written in 1923 by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) a Jesuit priest, a theologian and a palaeontologist, whilst he was working as part of a team in palaeontological fieldwork in the Ordos desert, a barren landscape, west of Peking, near the border with Inner Mongolia.

Today, let us read the beginning of Part III, “Fire in the Earth”, that is the equivalent of the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

It follows Part I, “The Offering”, read last week, that was the equivalent of the Offertory at Mass, and Part II, “Fire over the Earth”, read on Monday this week, that was the equivalent of the *epiclesis*, the moment at Mass when the priest calls the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine to make them become the Body and Blood of Christ.

Because Part III is a bit longer, it will be divided into two posts: one for today, Wednesday, and one for Friday.

**Fire in the Earth (1/2)**

It is done.

Once again the Fire has penetrated the earth.

Not with sudden crash of thunderbolt, riving the mountain-tops: does the Master break down doors to enter his own home? Without earthquake, or thunderclap: the flame has lit up the whole world from within. All things individually and collectively are penetrated and flooded by it, from the inmost core of the tiniest atom to the mighty sweep of the most universal laws of being: so naturally has it flooded every element, every energy, every connecting link in the unity of our cosmos; that one might suppose the cosmos to have burst spontaneously into flame.

In the new humanity which is begotten today the Word prolongs the unending act of his own birth; and by virtue of his immersion in the world’s womb the great waters of the kingdom of matter have, without even a ripple, been endued with life. No visible tremor marks this inexpressible transformation; and yet, mysteriously and in very truth, at the touch of the supersubstantial Word the immense host which is the universe is made flesh. Through your own incarnation, my God, all matter is henceforth incarnate.

Through our thoughts and our human experiences, we long ago became aware of the strange properties which make the universe so like our flesh:

like the flesh it attracts us by the charm which lies in the mystery of its curves and folds and in the depths of its eyes;

like the flesh it disintegrates and eludes us when submitted to our analyses or to our fallings of and in the process of its own perdurance;

as with the flesh, it can only be embraced in the endless reaching out to attain what lies beyond the confines of what has been given to us.

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All of us, Lord, from the moment we are born feel within us this disturbing mixture of remoteness and nearness; and in our heritage of sorrow and hope, passed down to us through the ages, there is no yearning more desolate than that which makes us weep with vexation and desire as we stand in the midst of the Presence which hovers about us nameless and impalpable and is dwelling in all things. *Si forte attraheret eum.*<sup>1</sup>

Now, Lord, through the consecration of the world the luminosity and fragrance which suffuse the universe take on for me the lineaments of a body and a face—in you. What my mind glimpse through its hesitant explorations, what my heart craved with so little expectation of fulfilment, you now magnificently unfold for me: the fact that your creatures are not merely so linked together in solidarity that none can exist unless all the rest surround it, but that all are so dependent on a single central reality that a true life, borne in common by them all, gives them ultimately their consistence and their unity.

Shatter, my God, through the daring of your revelation the childishly timid outlook that can conceive of nothing greater or more vital in the world than the pitiable perfection of our human organism. On the road to a bolder comprehension of the universe the children of this world day by day outdistance the masters of Israel; but do you, Lord Jesus, “in whom all things subsist,” show yourself to those who love you as the higher Soul and the physical centre of your creation. Are you not well aware that for us this is a question of life or death? As for me, if I could not believe that your real Presence animates and makes tractable and enkindles even the very least of the energies which invade me or brush past me, would I not die of cold?

I thank you, my God, for having in a thousand different ways led my eyes to discover the immense simplicity of things. Little by little, through the irresistible development of these yearnings you implanted in me as a child, through the influence of gifted friends who entered my life at certain moments to bring light and strength to my mind, and through the awakenings of spirit I owe to the successive initiations, gentle and terrible, which you caused me to undergo: through all these I have been brought to the point where I can no longer see anything, nor any longer breathe, outside that *milieu* in which all is made one.

At this moment when your life has just poured with superabundant vigour into the sacrament of the world, I shall savour with heightened consciousness the intense yet tranquil rapture of a vision whose coherence and harmonies I can never exhaust.

[...]

*To be continued...*

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of Heaven and Earth” (Ps 123 (124), v. 8)

Fr HP

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<sup>1</sup> “[God did this] so that they [all mankind] would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him” (Ac 17, 27)