

Fri., 24th April 2020**To all members of our International English-Speaking Community of the Parish of Luxembourg Notre-Dame**

Since Tuesday, 24th March 2020, we have been 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.

In the first week, after a short biography of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin until that year 1923 when he wrote that piece of mystic literature (See: <https://catholic.lu/2020/03/24/facing-unusual-times-part-1/>), a brief introduction of the essay itself was given and a large excerpt of Part I, “The Offering”, in its French original version accompanied by a piece of organ music in the background, was offered online (See: <https://catholic.lu/2020/03/25/facing-unusual-times-part-ii-by-fr-hp/>).

We then read Part I, “The Offering”, in full in its English version (See: <https://catholic.lu/2020/03/26/facing-unusual-times-part-iii/>).

On Friday, 27th March 2020, it was suggested you found some quiet time on our own over the weekend to ponder and reflect with Part I of that essay and some selected excerpts from the Scripture. Tips for personal prayer were given (See: <https://catholic.lu/2020/03/27/facing-unusual-times-part-iv-by-fr-hp/>)

In the second week, we read Part II of *The Mass on the World*, “Fire over the Earth”, 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 (See: <https://catholic.lu/2020/03/30/facing-unusual-times-part-iv-by-fr-hp-2/>), as well as Part III of the essay, “Fire in the Earth”, which was divided in two sections. Part III is the equivalent of the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ (See: <https://catholic.lu/2020/04/01/facing-unusual-times-part-vi-by-fr-hp/> & <https://catholic.lu/2020/04/03/facing-unusual-times-part-vii-by-fr-hp/>).

As was the case for the previous weekend, some tips for personal prayer were given on Friday, 3rd April 2020 (See: <https://catholic.lu/2020/04/03/facing-unusual-times-tips-for-prayer-week-ii-by-fr-hp/>).

During Holy week, we took a break.

In the third week, we read Part IV of the essay, “Communion”, divided into two sections (See <https://catholic.lu/2020/04/14/facing-unusual-times-part-viii-by-fr-hp/> & <https://catholic.lu/2020/04/16/facing-unusual-times-part-ix-by-fr-hp/>).

Finally, this past week we read Part V of the essay, “Prayer”, divided into three sections (See <https://catholic.lu/2020/04/20/facing-unusual-times-part-x-by-fr-hp/> & <https://catholic.lu/2020/04/22/facing-unusual-times-part-xi-by-fr-hp/> & <https://catholic.lu/2020/04/24/facing-unusual-times-part-xii-by-fr-hp/>)

For the last time today some tips for prayer are given overleaf for the weekend.

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

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I. Preparing my Prayer: Preambles

Make sure your smartphone, your computer and any other electronic device is switched off in order for you not to be disturbed whilst you take this time for silent meditation.

Determine how much time you wish to devote to this quiet time of inner reflection and stick to it (it may be 15, 20, 30 minutes, etc. Simply make sure that you can have that time in full for you alone without being interrupted).

Find a suitable place where you can really be in silence and find a suitable bodily position so that you are not disturbed by an aching joint or any other physical disturbance.

Turn inwardly to God "your Father who is in that secret place" (Mt 6, 6) and ask him for the grace to genuinely acknowledge Him as Creator and Saviour and remember all his goodness and riches for all humankind (or anything else you would like to ask God for in your spiritual life today, that is: to help you acknowledge that God "is the one, only Lord", and anything that may help you "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength" and "love your neighbour as yourself" cf. Mk 12, 28-34).

N.B.: You may choose to experience such a prayer time every day. Each time though never forget to go through the preambles before you start praying. They are essential steps to prepare oneself to meet and listen to the Lord "who is in that secret place", waiting for me, waiting to talk to me, if only I am ready to take the appropriate means to listen to Him.

II. Praying

From page 3 to page 6, you will find diversified tips to pray which make use of the text of *The Mass on the World* by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in relationship with the Scripture.

III. Finishing my Prayer: Talking to God "as one friend speaks to another" (*SpEx*, No. 54)

See at the end of this document on page 7 (after the tips of prayer of Part II) how you are invited to conclude your prayer.

Fri., 24th April 2020**II. Praying with the Text of The Mass on the World by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**

Read again slowly Part V, “Prayer”, in full and simply pause and remain with one or two sentences that are inspiring for you. Let them echo in your own life and experience.

For instance:

““Lord.” Yes, at last, through the twofold mystery of this universal consecration and communion I have found one to whom I can wholeheartedly give this name. As long as I could see—or dared see—in you, Lord Jesus, only the man who lived two thousand years ago, the sublime moral teacher, the Friend, the Brother, my love remained timid and constrained. Friends, brothers, wise men: have we not many of these around us, great souls, chosen souls, and much closer to us? And then can man ever give himself utterly to a nature which is purely human? Always from the very first it was the world, greater than all the elements which make up the world, that I was in love with; and never before was there anyone before whom I could in honesty bow down. And so for a long time, even though I believed, I strayed, not knowing what it was I loved. But now, Master, today, when through the manifestation of these superhuman powers with which your resurrection endowed you you shine forth from within all the forces of the earth and so become visible to me, now I recognize you as my Sovereign, and with delight I surrender myself to you.”

This paragraph can be read as a profession of faith of Pierre Teilhard about who God is for Him, what it means for him to call God ‘Lord’.

This may be an opportunity to read again and pray with the profession of faith of Peter either in the Gospel according to Matthew (See p. 4-5) or the Gospel according to John (See p. 6).

This may give you an occasion to reflect on who God really is for you.

Fri., 24th April 2020***Gospel according to Matthew, Ch. 16, vv. 13-26 (Mt 16, 13-26)***

13. When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of man is?'
14. And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'
15. 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?'
16. Then Simon Peter spoke up and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'
17. Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a blessed man! Because it was no human agency that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven.'
18. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community. And the gates of the underworld can never overpower it.
19. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'
20. Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to say to anyone that he was the Christ.
21. From then onwards Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day.
22. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to rebuke him. 'Heaven preserve you, Lord,' he said, 'this must not happen to you.'
23. But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because you are thinking not as God thinks but as human beings do.'
24. Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.'
25. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.
26. What, then, will anyone gain by winning the whole world and forfeiting his life? Or what can anyone offer in exchange for his life?'

(Source: <https://www.bibliacatolica.com.br/en/new-jerusalem-bible/matthew/16/>)

Suggestions to pray with this passage

Go through all the preambles listed on page 2 (I. Preparing my Prayer: Preambles)

Context: Jesus is on his way with his disciples in the region of Caesarea Philippi.

Imagine a pathway in the region of Israel (the dust, the surrounding landscape, etc.). Jesus is underway with some disciples walking with him.

Ask the Lord the grace to be able to tell who Jesus truly is for you, to acknowledge who Jesus truly is for you.

I. vv. 13-16: Peter's Profession of Faith

Jesus asks his disciples about what people tell about him.

Take time to listen to the various answers.

Then comes the question of truth for the disciples: "But you, who do you say I am?"

Moved by a revelation, Peter can answer on behalf of all the disciples: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God".

I take time to imagine Peter and see him answering Jesus's question.

What would I say if I were asked "for you, who do you say Jesus is?"?

Let the Spirit inspire in you the answer you may give to that question.

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2. vv. 21-23: *Peter's Rebuke*

Peter is not ready to accept Jesus's announcement of his Passion. This does not fit with his own earthly representation of the Messiah.

Whilst Jesus has just "congratulated" Peter for his divinely inspired profession of faith, he now harshly rebukes him: "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because you are thinking not as God thinks but as human beings do".

Take time to measure the contrast between both moments.

What does this tell me about Jesus?

What does this tell me about Peter, about Jesus's disciples?

What does it trigger in me?

3. vv. 24-26: *Conditions for following Jesus*

Jesus states the conditions necessary to follow him.

Listen to them.

How do they resonate in me? How do they echo in my own life?

What do I feel drawn to tell Jesus about my wishes, my hope, my fear, etc.?

To finish your prayer, go to p. 7

Fri., 24th April 2020***Gospel according to John, Ch. 6, vv. 66-69 (Jn 6, 66-69)***

66. After this, many of his disciples went away and accompanied him no more.
 67. Then Jesus said to the Twelve, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?'
 68. Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life,
 69. and we believe; we have come to know that you are the Holy One of God'.

(Source: <https://www.bibliacatolica.com.br/en/new-jerusalem-bible/john/6/>)***Suggestions to pray with this passage***

Go through all the preambles listed on page 2 (I. Preparing my Prayer: Preambles)

Context: Jesus has just delivered one of his key discourses in the Gospel of John in which he has said "I am the bread of life" and "I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world." This has triggered huge dissension, not only among the anonymous people who had heard Jesus, but also among his disciples, to the point that some said: 'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?' and started to distance themselves from him.

Imagine a place where many people have gathered and have listened to Jesus. Look at the variety of the people there, most of them shocked by what Jesus has just told them. Look at his disciples, those who have been with him for some time now, and look at some of them going away.

Ask the Lord for the grace to be able to tell who Jesus truly is for you, to acknowledge who Jesus truly is for you.

1. v. 66: Jesus' Disciples are Going Away from Him

Imagine how Jesus might have felt at that moment.

What does it tell me about who Jesus is?

What does it tell me about those who had followed Jesus at that time... and those who follow him today?

2. vv. 67: Jesus' Question to his Closest Friends

Imagine how Jesus asks his closest friends his questions: 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' Is he disturbed? distraught? confident? resentful? etc.

What does it tell me about who Jesus is?

What does it tell me about those who had followed Jesus at that time... and those who follow him today?

3. vv. 68-69: Peters' Profession of Faith

Listen to Peter's answer: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we have come to know that you are the Holy One of God'. Imagine how Peter says this: is he full of energy? Shy? Frightened? etc.

Reflect on the resources from which Peter draws to give his answer, knowing that he has spent several weeks and months day and night with Jesus, following him, listening to him, witnessing his miracles, etc.

What would I tell Jesus if I were asked the same question as the one Jesus has asked his closest disciples?

To finish your prayer, go to p. 7

Fri., 24th April 2020**III. Finishing my Prayer: Talking to God “as one friend speaks to another” (*SpEx*, No. 54)**

Shortly before the end of the period I have assigned myself for this meditation (15 min, 30 min, etc.) I gather what the Lord has given me in the depth of my heart.

I let the Spirit inspire in me a prayer to the Lord:

- I may give thanks to the Lord for His goodness for me, for the people who have been part of my personal growth, my spiritual journey, etc.
- I may be inclined to ask for God’s forgiveness if there is something for which I believe I require His healing power and loving care, etc.
- I may ask God to help me grow in my faith in the Risen Christ.
- etc.

In all cases, I finally formally end my prayer with the “Our Father”, slowly.

N.B.:

1. After my prayer - not during my prayer! - I may take some notes in a small notebook, to remember what has been most striking for me during that time of prayer.
2. I may experience such a prayer time every day. Each time though I will never forget to go through the preambles before I start praying. They are essential steps to prepare oneself to meet and listen to the Lord “who is in that secret place” (Mt 6, 6), waiting for me, waiting to talk to me, if only I am ready to take the appropriate means to listen to Him.