

Fri., 27th March 2020

To all members of our International English-Speaking Community of the Parish of Luxembourg Notre-Dame

This past week, from Tuesday onwards, we started to read 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.

We started on Tuesday with 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/>).

We continued on Wednesday with a brief introduction of the essay itself and we listened to a large excerpt of Part I, “The offering”, in its French original version accompanied by a piece of organ music in the background

(See: <https://catholic.lu/2020/03/25/facing-unusual-times-part-ii-by-fr-hp/>).

Yesterday on Thursday we read Part I in full, in its English version

(See: <https://catholic.lu/2020/03/26/facing-unusual-times-part-iii/>)

Today we are on Friday. This is the last post of this week. We will be back next Monday.

Today, and over the weekend, we suggest you find some quiet time on our own to ponder and reflect with Part I of that essay.

Overleaf are some tips which you may find helpful to accompany you this weekend on your own spiritual journey accompanied by *The Mass on the World* by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

To be continued next week...

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

Fr HP

N.B. If you need any further assistance, Fr HP is available via e-mail:

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Fri., 27th March 2020**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 minutes, or 30 minutes, etc. Simply make sure that you can have that time for you alone).

Find a suitable place where you can really be in silence and 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 remember all his goodness and riches for you in your life or anything else you would like to ask God for in your spiritual life today.

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

Below you will find two ways of praying:

II.1. The first way of praying makes use of the text of "The Offering" by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (see p. 3).

II.2. The second way of praying makes use of the Scripture, inspired by the text of "The Offering" by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (see p. 4 & p. 5).

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

See at the end of this document on p. 6 (after the tips of prayer of Part II) how you are invited to conclude your prayer.

Fri., 27th March 2020**II.1. First Way of Praying: With the Text of “The Offering” by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**

Read again slowly Part I, “The Offering”, 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:

1. “Offering all the labours and sufferings of the world”

“Since once again, Lord—though this time not in the forests of the Aisne but in the steppes of Asia—I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself; I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labors and sufferings of the world”.

I may be facing a very trying time especially these days where my life has been shaken by the CoViD-19 Pandemics: family life, social life, working life, etc. I look at all the various aspects of my life over these last few days.

I can also think of all those who are dear to me: family members, friends, acquaintances, etc., who are particularly hit by the situation.

I can think of those who suffer most from the pandemics, those in specific countries (Italy, Spain, etc.), those from specific categories (lone parents, homeless people, refugees, etc.).

I can also think of all medical staff, especially doctors, surgeons, nurses, etc., who are put under immense strain these days but who devotedly try and bring solace, cure, comfort to all those who are in a critical condition. I may include those who look after the elderly in their secluded retirement homes.

2. “I see and I love all those whom you have given me to sustain and charm my life”

“One by one, Lord, I see and I love all those whom you have given me to sustain and charm my life. One by one also I number all these who make up that other beloved family which has gradually surrounded me, its unity fashioned out of the most disparate elements, with affinities of the heart, of scientific research and of thought. And again one by one—more vaguely it is true, yet all inclusively — I call before me the whole vast anonymous army of living humanity; these who surround me and support me though I do not know them; those who come, and those who go; above all, these who in office, laboratory and factory, through their vision of truth or despite their error, truly believe in the progress of earthly reality and who today will take up again their impassioned pursuit of the light.”

I may take time to pause and look back at my life before the pandemics started to cause havoc in my daily routine.

What is it that I really love?

Who is it that really counts for me, who “have sustain[ed] and charm[ed] my life” so far?

I give thanks to the Lord for all those he has put in my way, who have brought me up, who have helped me, etc.

Fri., 27th March 2020**II.2. Second Way of Praying: With the Scripture**

Instead of using Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's text, but inspired by two of its passages, we suggest two Bible passages for you to pray with.

For each passage read it once or twice slowly and go back to the one verse, the one sentence that has been striking for you, that has been echoing with something in your life.

You may use some of the tips for prayer indicated below each text.

1. *“Once upon a time, men took into your temple the first fruits of their harvests, the flower of their flocks.”*

You may use **Dt 26, 1-11**:

"1. 'When you have entered the country which Yahweh your God is giving you as heritage, when you have taken possession of it and are living in it, 2. you must set aside the first-fruits of all the produce of the soil raised by you in your country, given you by Yahweh your God. You must put these in a basket and go to the place where Yahweh your God chooses to give his name a home. 3. You will go to the priest then in office and say to him, "Today I declare to Yahweh my God that I have reached the country which Yahweh swore to our ancestors that he would give us." 4. 'The priest will then take the basket from your hand and lay it before the altar of Yahweh your God. 5. In the presence of Yahweh your God, you will then pronounce these words: "My father was a wandering Aramaean, who went down to Egypt with a small group of men, and stayed there, until he there became a great, powerful and numerous nation. 6. The Egyptians ill-treated us, they oppressed us and inflicted harsh slavery on us. 7. But we called on Yahweh, God of our ancestors. Yahweh heard our voice and saw our misery, our toil and our oppression; 8. and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with mighty hand and outstretched arm, with great terror, and with signs and wonders. 9. He brought us here and has given us this country, a country flowing with milk and honey. 10. Hence, I now bring the first-fruits of the soil that you, Yahweh, have given me." 'You will then lay them before Yahweh your God, and prostrate yourself in the presence of Yahweh your God. 11. You must then rejoice in all the good things that Yahweh your God has bestowed on you".

Source : <https://www.bibliacatolica.com.br/en/new-jerusalem-bible/deuteronomy/26/>

Tips to pray with that passage:

Context of the passage: It is a fictitious address by Moses to the Hebrews on the threshold of the Promised Land. The Hebrews are invited to deliver to God the first fruits they will reap in that Promise Land in thanksgiving for all God's goodness for his chosen people.

Before you go any further, imagine a man, at the threshold of a luxuriant land, full of magnificent and tasty fruits.

1. *vv. 1-4: "When you have entered...":*

The people has been set in motion by the promise of God to be given "a country flowing with milk and honey". Take time to look at somebody working in his field, their orchard, and carefully reap the best first fruits of his harvest not to use them for himself but to offer them to God. Then you may ask yourself:

- What about me? Which promise was given to me by God in my life?
- What have I grown on my land?
- What first fruits may I offer to God?

Ponder and remain with those thoughts as long you feel nourished in your prayer.

2. *vv. 5-10a: "My father was a wandering Aramaean":*

Listen to the story of that man who remembers the story of his people starting from Abraham his forebear and who remembers how God has intervened in that story, how God has been carefully looking after his people. Then you may ask yourself:

- When has God been present in my life so far?
- Has he also set me in motion to dare tread a new path at some stage in my life?
- Have I been granted a promise by God? Which one?

Ponder and remain with those thoughts as long you feel nourished in your prayer.

3. *vv. 10b-11: "You will then lay them before Yahweh your God":*

Take time to look at that man laying his basket with the first fruits of his harvest: he prostrates himself; he rejoices... Then you may ask yourself:

- What are the fruits I am today laying before God?
- What is a source of joy for me today for which I can give thanks to God?

Ponder and remain with those thoughts as long you feel nourished in your prayer.

Fri., 27th March 2020**II.2. Second Way of Praying: With the Scripture (Cont'd)**

2. *“Yet in the very depths of this formless mass you have implanted—and I am sure of, for I sense it—a desire, irresistible, hallowing, which makes us cry out, believer and unbeliever alike: “Lord, make us one”.”*

You may use **Jn 17, 20-26**:

"20. [Holy Father,] I pray not only for these but also for those who through their teaching will come to believe in me. 21. May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. 22. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. 23. With me in them and you in me, may they be so perfected in unity that the world will recognise that it was you who sent me and that you have loved them as you have loved me. 24. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may always see my glory which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25. Father, Upright One, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. 26. I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them."

Source: <https://www.bibliacatolica.com.br/en/new-jerusalem-bible/john/17/>

Tips to pray with that passage:

Context of the passage: It is the last time Jesus is gathering at a meal with his disciples. Tomorrow, He will suffer his Passion. He knows it. Before He is separated from them, He prays to His Father.

Before you go any further, imagine Jesus with 11 of his disciples around a table, in a closed place, where they all have had a meal.

1. *“May they all be one...”:*

This is the most pressing wish of Jesus expressed in this prayer. Its source is in the very union of Jesus with His Father. This is not for his own sake or for his disciples' own sake or, but “so that the world may believe it was you who sent me” that Jesus prays for their unity.

Take time to look at your own life: family, relatives, acquaintances, friends, etc. Then you may ask yourself:

- What has united us?
- What has divided us?
- What effects does it have around me?
- Is there anything I may do to try and improve the situation?

Ponder and remain with those thoughts as long you feel nourished in your prayer.

2. *v. 26: “I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known”:*

Christianity has been expanding for more than two millennia. We are now 1,3 billions Christians on the earth. Through my baptism, I was given the privilege to be made a child of God, and through my Christian education, I have been invited to know Jesus, to develop my spiritual life, to cultivate my faith, my hope and my charity. Take time to remember the people and the places where you have been able to grow in that faith and knowledge of Jesus (as a child, as an adolescent, as an adult). Remember also the ways and means that have been used. Then you may ask yourself:

- What can I be thankful to the Lord for?
- In which way could I possibly be (more) involved in the spread of the Good News today around me, so that the Lord's name may be known even more?
- Is there any need in our Church today for which I would like to pray?

Ponder and remain with those thoughts as long you feel nourished in your prayer.

Fri., 27th March 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:

III.1. After having prayed with the First Way of Praying (With the Text of “The Offering” by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin)

If I have prayed with the *First Way of Praying*, for instance:

- I may pray for all the people I have called to remembrance in my prayer. I may ask God to look after them, to bring them consolation, to encourage them, to strengthen them, etc.
- I may ask God to help me see what little step I feel called to take in order to bring my own, limited but meaningful contribution to the common efforts deployed at present to help everyone “facing unusual times”.
- I may ask God for a grace, for me, for my beloved one, for any of those whom I have remembered in my prayer and for whom I would like to ask God for special help.
- etc.

III.2. After having prayed with the Second Way of Praying (With the Scripture)

If I have prayed with the *Second Way of Praying*, for instance:

- 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 ask God to help me see what little step I feel called to take in order to bring my own, limited but meaningful contribution to the common efforts deployed, to bear more fruits, to help other grow in their own faith, 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.
- 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”, waiting for me, waiting to talk to me, if only I am ready to take the appropriate means to listen to Him.