

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 first section (out of three) of Part V, “Prayer”.

It is the final part of the essay. It follows Part I, “The Offering”, that was the equivalent of the Offertory at Mass; Part II, “Fire over the Earth”, 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; Part III, “Fire in the Earth”, that was the equivalent of the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and Part IV, ‘Communion’, read last week.

Prayer (1/3)

Lord Jesus, now that beneath these world forces you have become truly and physically everything for me, everything about me, everything within me, I shall gather into a single prayer both my delight in what I have and my thirst for what I lack; and following the lead of your great servant I shall repeat these enflamed words in which, I firmly believe, the Christianity of tomorrow will find its increasingly clear portrayal:

“Lord, lock me up in the deepest depths of your heart, and then, holding me there, burn me, purify me, set me in fire, sublimate me, till I become utterly what you would have me be, through the utter annihilation of my ego.”¹

*Tu autem, Domine mi, include me in imis visceribus Cordis tui. Atque ibi me detine, excoque, expurga, accende, ignifac, sublima, ad purissimum Cordis tui gustum atque placitum, ad puram annihilationem meam.*²

“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. [...]

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

¹ “The term “ego” is used here (in contrast to the “true self”) to denote the proud, defiant self-reliance, the attempted autonomy, of man in revolt against God. Only through the death of the ego can the true self be liberated; for man is truly himself only when he has replaced his egocentricity by theocentricity and thus found his true self by looking for it in God, in whom alone we “live and move and have our being.” (Tr. note.)

² “And thou, my Lord, enfold me in the depths of thy Heart. And there keep me, refine, purge, kindle, set on fire, raise aloft, according to the most pure desire of thy Heart, and for my cleansing extinction.”