

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, priest and scientist, 1881-1955

Observed 10 April



Pierre Teilhard de Chardin has been an inspiration to many in the 20th and early 21st centuries. The French Jesuit was a philosopher, paleontologist, and geologist. The great intellectual and spiritual work of his life was focused on integrating religious experience with natural science. Many have been fascinated by his idea that natural evolution is drawn toward an “Omega Point” at which the human community will achieve a new era of unity and peace, forever connected with the spirit of the earth. His thinking foreshadows the later “Gaia Hypothesis” and the ecological consciousness of the contemporary church. Today it is common to see religion, science, and philosophy as three mutually exclusive ways of thought. Teilhard helps us to see that they can complement one another, as we seek to understand God and the universe.

This eloquent prayer gives a window into his spirit:

Blessed be you, harsh matter, barren soil, stubborn rock:
you who yield only to force, you who cause us to work if we would eat.
Blessed be you, perilous matter, violent sea, untamable passion:
you who, unless we fetter you, will devour us.
Blessed be you, mighty matter, irresistible march of evolution,
reality ever new-born, you who,
by constantly shattering our mental categories,
force us to go ever further and further in our pursuit of the truth.
Blessed be you, universal matter, immeasurable time, boundless ether,

triple abyss of stars and atoms and generations:
you who by overflowing and dissolving our narrow standards or
measurements reveal to us the dimensions of God.

Blessed be you, impenetrable matter:

you who, interposed between our minds and the world of essences,
cause us to languish with the desire to pierce through
the seamless veil of phenomena.

Blessed be you, mortal matter:

you who one day will undergo the process of dissolution within us
and will thereby take us forcibly into the very heart of that which exists.
You who batter us and then dress our wounds, you who resist and yield to us,
you who wreck and build, you who shackle and liberate, the sap of our souls,
the hand of God, the flesh of Christ: it is you, matter, that I bless. Amen.

Lessons Isaiah 55:6-11; Psalm 65; Revelation 21:1-6; John 3:31-35

Collect Eternal God, the whole cosmos sings of your glory, from the dividing of a
single cell to the vast expanse of interstellar space: We bless you for your theologian and
scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who perceived the divine in the evolving creation.
Enable us to become faithful stewards of your divine works and heirs of your eternal
kingdom; through Jesus Christ, the firstborn of all creation, who with you and the Holy
Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.