

Teilhard de Chardin's Mass On the World

This is a liturgical version by Cynthia Bourgeault. It is adapted from the Offertory of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's "Mass on the World" (*The Heart of Matter*, p. 119-121) as excerpted by Ursula King (in *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: Selected Readings*, p. 80-81).

Participants are seated in a circle. After a few minutes of silent settling, the Mass begins. The readers can read from their seats, or can come forward to a lectern or podium. If they choose to sit, it is best for them to be opposite one another in the circle.

If preferred, the whole recitation can be done over soft background music. Cynthia Bourgeault strongly recommends "Essence" by Peter Kater, which is forgiving in the extreme and perfectly adapted to the overall mood and intent.

READER 1:

Since once again, Lord...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 world my altar and on it will offer you all the labors and sufferings of the world.

Over there, on the horizon, the sun has just touched with light the outermost fringe of the eastern sky. Once again, beneath this moving sheet of fire, the living surface of the earth wakes and, once again, begins its fearful travail. I will place on my paten, O God, the harvest to be won by this renewal of labor. Into my chalice I shall pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from the earth's fruits.

My chalice and my paten are the depths of a soul laid widely open to all the forces which in a moment will rise up from every corner of the earth and converge upon the Spirit. Grant me the remembrance and the mystic presence of all those whom the light is now awakening to a new day.

READER 2:

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, I also number those 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 one by one—more vaguely, it is true, yet all-inclusively—I call before me the whole vast anonymous army of living humanity; those who surround me and support me though I do not know them; those who come and those who go; above all, those 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 again take up their impassioned pursuit of the light.

This restless multitude, confused or orderly, the immensity of which terrifies us; this ocean of humanity whose slow, monotonous wave-flows trouble the hearts of even those whose faith is most firm; it is to his deep that I thus desire all the fibers of my being should respond. All the things in the world to which this day will bring increase; all those that will diminish; all those, too, that will die: all of them, Lord, I try to gather into my arms so as to hold them out to you in offering. This is the material of my sacrifice, the only material you desire.

READER 1:

Once upon a time, men took into your temple the first fruits of their harvest, the flower of their flocks. But the offering you really want, the offering you mysteriously need each day to appease your hunger, to slake your thirst, is nothing less than the growth of the world borne ever onward in the stream of universal becoming.

(Reader 1 gestures participants to stand and raise their arms in a mutual oblation.)

Receive, O Lord, this all-embracing host which your whole creation, moved by your magnetism, offers you at this dawn of a new day.

(All in the circle hold the gesture for at least one or two minutes—as long as the energy can be sustained. Then, as Reader 1 lowers their arms, inviting those in the circle to do likewise, Reader 2 begins to speak.)

READER 2:

This bread, our toil, is of itself, I know, but an immense fragmentation; this wine, our pain, is no more, I know, than a draught that dissolves. Yet in the very depths of this formless mass you

have implanted—and this 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.”

READER 1

“Lord, make us one.....”

(Readers encourage others in circle to join in this spoken petition. When words subside, turn down the music, and readers again sit, inviting participants to do likewise. Liturgy then moves into silent meditation for at least five or ten more minutes.)