**St. Columba’s Lenten Group Guide for Week 3**

*The Unbearable Wholeness of Being* by Ilia Delio

Précis and Questions for reflection

**Chapter 3:** “The discovery of evolution, according to Teilhard de Chardin, is not only a new scientific discovery of nature but of nature passionately alive, throbbing, and pulsating with energy and growth ... Nature is endowed with mysterious forces of attraction that science alone cannot explain, forces that give rise to integral wholes.”

“Something accounts for the dynamic unfolding of evolution and gives evolution its direction. Teilhard describes this ‘something’ as the energy of consciousness.” Astrophysicist James Jean observes: “We discover that the universe shows evidence of a designing or controlling power that has something in common with our own individual minds.”

“The direction of evolution toward increased consciousness must be seen together with the evolution of integral wholeness. The development of consciousness is a *transition from a lower to a higher state of centro-complexity*, but centricity is another way to talk about integration. As life becomes more complex and conscious, it becomes more integrally whole. … Teilhard called this unitive principle undergirding wholeness *Omega* ... [I]t subsists throughout nature as the centrating principle or the principle of integrated wholeness ... Teilhard identified this deep personal presence of centrating energy—*Omega*—with the ultimate depth of love we name God.

“Teilhard’s notion of love spans all three types of love [*agape, eros and philia*] because it is a fundamental energy of attraction that differentiates personality. It is not simply the promotion of well-being but the deepening of being itself ... [It] is a passionate force at the heart of the Big Bang universe, the fire that breathes life into matter and unifies elements center to center; love is deeply embedded in the cosmos, a ‘cosmological force.’”

Teilhard writes: “Love is the integrated energy field, the center of all centers, the whole of every whole, that makes each whole desire more wholeness ... It draws together and unites; in uniting it differentiates. Love is the core energy of evolution and its goal.”

“[U]nion is the primary category; to be is to be united. Being is the outflow of union, and union is always toward more being ... True unity does not fuse the elements it brings together: ‘union differentiates.’ Hence, this center-to-center union and differentiation give rise to personalization ... Evolution is the process of cosmic personalization ... [T]he universe is *oriented* toward... an increase in consciousness and centeredness.”

“In the process of cosmic personalization, persons sexually unite [and] the individual emerges from isolation and enters into union with another in a way that is more spiritualized from the start than the individual personality ... [Sex] is the energy of love by which this universe is in the process of personalization, becoming more spiritualized, energized, and conscious.”

**Chapter 4:** “We are born out of stardust, cousins of daffodils ... [W]e continue to make the cosmos story an object of our thought rather than seeing ourselves as part of the whole ...”
“The discovery of evolution and quantum physics opened up a new window… that illuminates the role of God and human in evolution. It is not a matter of trying to fit the old God into the new cosmos; rather, it is the birth of a new God ... God is not created being, and created being is not God, but God is one with created/cosmic being and created/cosmic being is one with God. Panentheism means that God is in the cosmos and the cosmos is in God, but God is more than the cosmos by the nature of being God ... ”

Paul Tillich: “God is not a Being among beings. Rather, God is existence itself … [E]very cultural creation—a painting, a law, a political movement—has a religious meaning to be explored ... Every dynamic aspect of being is a dynamic presence of God.”

“Raimon Panikkar’s understanding of God, like Tillich’s, is integrally related to created reality; there is no God without cosmos and no cosmos without God ... Divine being is uncreated, yet it mutually co-inheres in created being. ...Creation exists because God exists, and because God exists, creation exists, that is, God and creation mutually co-inhere ... God is not the ontologically distinct Being who empowers created being but the very dimension of created being by which being transcends itself toward ever great relationality, wholeness, and depth.”

In Teilhard’s view “[c]reation is a kenosis of divine love, a constant emptying of divine self into other. ...[He] opposed the idea of an absolutely gratuitous creation that makes creation independent of God or merely contingent on God ... Creation is not merely gift of God; it is being-in-love with God ... Creation is the Beloved of God and the becoming of God in love. ...God is not the supernatural being above but the supranatural center of everything that exists.”

“The Trinity symbolizes integrated wholeness; of ‘persons’ in love or fully integrated energies of personal being ... [C]reation ... emerges out of the innermost depths of trinitarian life.”

“God’s love fills up each being... but the limits of any being cannot contain God; thus the excess of God’s love spills over as ‘transcendence’, more than any being can grasp. Transcendence is the fecundity of love and the ‘yearning’ dimension of everything that exists ... God’s love is divine, dynamic energy, always seeking more relationship more unity, and being in love.”

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

Does Teilhard’s vision of God as the love that energizes evolution and is its goal affect my faith?

Can I understand myself as made of stardust and cousin to a daffodil?

What would “the birth of a new God” mean to me?

**Pick a passage or concept that strikes you and bring it to the group for discussion.**