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## *Say Again the Words, "This is My Body"*

**An article for the *Cathedral Times* by the Very Rev. Sam Candler**

Two weeks ago, I was delighted to introduce Sister Ilia Delio to the community of the Cathedral of St. Philip. Her visit on that beautiful Saturday morning was arranged and sponsored by our faithful Cathedral Book Store; and her words and thoughts were as beautiful as our Georgia spring flowers.

In fairness to her, I do not attempt to accurately summarize her fascinating talk. She presented the work of the Jesuit priest and paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who found the being and movement of God in the being and movement of evolution itself. Using the principles of both evolution and quantum theory, she observed, with Teilhard, that "the universe is thoroughly relational and in the framework of love." Or, more precisely, "the physical structure of the universe is love."

But, how Ilia Delio gets there, in her theology, is more complicated. She observes that nature is not finished yet, and so neither is God. God, and all matter of creation, including us, are one in each other; we are unfinished and evolving towards Teilhard's "Omega Point," which is the point where Christ will truly be all, in all. Sister Ilia had many ways to explain: "Evolution is the enfolding process of God and matter through the energies of love." Or: the God-World relationship is "relational holism." Or: "Evolution is not only the universe coming to be, but it is also God who is coming to be."

Turning to the complex subject of consciousness, Delio pointed to Einstein's theory that matter is really a form of energy. Further, our very consciousness is a form of energy, too, and so is God's consciousness. If, then, consciousness is a form of matter, "through ongoing incarnation, God becomes conscious and is completed in directed evolution." She quoted Teilhard that "Christianity is a religion of evolution," and "we cannot be saved except through the universe and as a continuation of the universe."

When I listened to Sister Ilia Delio again, a few days later in Washington DC, she concluded with one of Teilhard's most famous and dramatic statements, from his book, *The Divine Milieu*: "Over every living thing which is to spring up, to grow, to flower, to ripen during this day, say again the words: 'This is my Body'." Yes! I exclaimed. The Eucharist is our symbol, and our practice, of the incarnational principle of Christ, the familiar "sacramental principle." Christ is incarnate in bread and wine, and in everything, and in every person, around us.

Then, this past week, I was walking along some water; and I identified so many flowers and wonders of creation. There was the beautiful white Atamasco Lily – native to our area. Right next to her was the Yellow Iris (introduced to our area, they say). There was Privet, which is still pretty in blossom, even though everyone knows it is not just "introduced" but "invasive" now!

There were Blackberry blossoms everywhere, with its relative, Multiflora Rose, nearby (the first native, the second not!). And then, the glory of the day was the brilliant native Bluejacket, with its three rounded blue-violet petals, yellow anthers, and spidery violet hairs in the base. The Buttercups and White Clover were all over the field, edged by Honeysuckle and more Blackberry. And there, along the woods, was the Red Buckeye (firecracker plant!), and then the Cross Vine, with its red and yellow tubular flowers.

With such colorful variation, I thought of all the people of God. I thought of all the people of Church, both "native" and "introduced." I thought of all our colors and genetics. I thought of those in blossom and those not in blossom. All these wondrously complex human beings, and this glorious spring life, all of us, are part of the evolving glory of God. We are those to whom Teilhard said: "Over every living thing which is to spring up, to grow, to flower, to ripen during this day, say again the words: 'This is my Body'."

It's been said before. The Book of Colossians says that Christ "is the image of the invisible God, ...for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church... For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Colossians 1:15–19).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip

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