

“Hours of the Universe” by Sister Ilia Delio
Study Guide
August 2021

The Study Guide is intended to help you to reflect upon Delio’s theology and apply it to your faith. The questions may, but not necessarily, will be covered during the weekly gatherings on Zoom.

Matins

Introduction/ Chapter 1 – Living in a Wavy Universe.

1. Delio speaks about evolution as a dimension to which all thinking in every area must conform. What do you think that means?

Chapter 2 – Quantum Edge Catholicity

2. What does interaction between order/chaos mean for the ritual life of religion? Do we need to allow for more energy to inspire us in our connection with the divine?
3. What does living on the edge mean for our lives as Christians?

Chapter 3 – A Big Thinker for a Big Universe – Teilhard de Chardin

4. Christianity has focused upon the individual’s salvation through a belief in Christ as savior. How would Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (Teilhard) object to this emphasis?
5. Delio describes Teilhard as deeming God as “supranatural” not “supernatural”. What is the difference? Why is it important?

Lauds

Chapter 4 – Can We Discover God Anew.

6. The prayer (Lauds) (*page 19*) expands the implications of each of us being made in the image and likeness of God. What are the impacts if we truly believe act upon it?
7. “He (Teilhard) believed that without creation, something would be absolutely lacking to God, considered in the fulness not of God’s being but of God’s act of union. God and world are in a process of becoming a new reality *together* (*page 24*). What are the implications of Teilhard’s views on our role as co-creator?”

Chapter 5 – Mercy and the Humility of God

8. Delio speaks about the gift of love and compassion from the stranger who cared for her when she fell on the streets of Washington, D.C. How does that example reflect the primacy of the immanent God that extends love and is with us through our joy and suffering?

Chapter 6 – God in the Midst of Pain

9. We have grown up learning about a good that is all powerful and all knowing who judges us. How does that image get overturned by Delio's concept that "God's love is vulnerable and unconditional; it is to love completely and totally turned to the other, willing to undergo death."?

Chapter 7 – Do We Make a Difference to God?

10. As children and as adults, we were taught to discern God's will in our lives and follow that will. Delio contends that we are co-creators with God and can make a difference in our world and in completing God. What is your reaction to these views?

Chapter 8 – One Eye, One Self, One God

11. As Raimon Panikur discusses "Jesus is the Christ but Christ cannot be identified completely with Jesus." (page 47) Delio concludes "Christ then is no longer an external object of adoration but the deepest reality of every person's life, indeed, all life." (page 50). What does this mean for our relationship with Jesus?

Prime

Chapter 9 – Teilhard's Christian Pantheism

12. Delio discusses Teilhard's Christian pantheism stating "God is *in* matter, meaning that God is the ultimate horizon, the depth and breadth of matter, other than matter (transcendent) yet intimately present to matter (immanent)." (page 55). How does this fit or challenge our concept of God?

Chapter 10 – Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi: Laudato Si.

13. Delio discusses the disconnect between science and religion with the sun-centered (rather than earth centered) universe. She noted that Teilhard saw the world as a "cosmos, centered in Christ, who is the purpose of this universe, and the model of what is intended for this universe, that is union and transformation in God." (page 64)

Is there a role for a personal God in this theology? What implications does this have for our religious practices?

Chapter 11 – Pope Francis and Saint Francis

14. If we accept the Franciscan foundation of Laudato Si, divine love gave birth to creation and gave human kind the freedom to shape that creation and return that gift to God. What implications does this have for our role as co-creators of the earth?

Chapter 12 – Warming, Warming, Gone! Who will survive Climate Change

15. Delio uses Thomas Berry (page 83) to argue that: "Without a religion of the earth, a theology of divine immanence, and a spirituality of unity, the wealthy West (and East) may indeed be reduced to rubble. (page 84).

What is your reaction to these comments?

Chapter 13 – Can a Renewal of Inner Space Help Heal the Earth?

16. Delio argues that “technology has taken over the space of religion, and the trend will not reverse any time soon.” (*page 90*). Do you agree? If so, what needs to happen to reclaim the spiritual space usurped by technology?

Chapter 14 – Beatrice Bruteau, Pope Francis and Global Community

17. Delio explores Beatrice Bruteau’s work which distinguishes between the individual and the person – the person connected as an energy source within the universe. Delio concludes:

As long as we insist on old, quasi-dualistic ideas on what is “physical” and “spiritual” and do not see that we are fundamentally energy-related matter, we will continue to live on a lower level of evolution, as competitive individuals, spiraling downward toward global destruction. (*page 99*).

What does she mean by these thoughts? What is your reaction to them?

Terce

Chapter 15 - The Cosmic Christ

18. Delio synthesizes Richard Rohr’s theory of the Cosmic Christ that God Sent Jesus as a product of divine love not as a means to redeem humanity from original sin.

What is your reaction to Rohr’s theory? If we accept Rohr’s Cosmic Christ, what implications does it have for our sacramental and liturgical practices and how we view the crucifixion?

Chapter 16 – Christ, the Future

19. Delio wrestles with the early Church arguments about Jesus’ humanity and divinity. She concludes:

In this respect, to believe Jesus is divine and human cannot be accepted on external authority or naked faith. Rather, it must make sense on the basis of our experience – experience of self, of God, of others, and of the world. (*page 109*).

What does this mean for our lives in faith?

Chapter 17 – The Rainbow of Pride

20. How did you react to Delio’s use of scientific evidence and theological reflections relative to sexual and gender identity?

Chapter 18 – Race and Axial Consciousness

21. Delio attributes the shift in human consciousness (pre-axial to axial) as the underlying dynamic that contributed to racism. In this shift, human beings (and religion) shift their focus from the collective (tribal) to individual self-identity. She contends that a current shift of consciousness by Gen Y and Z will make the mixture of races, genders and religions the norm rather than the exception.

What is your reaction to her line of argument?

Sext

Chapter 19 – The Core Energy of Love

22. Delio speaks about the core energy of love as “an absolute fundamental force of attraction in the universe that overcomes all inertia, entropy, breakdown, and dissipation.” (*page 129*).

In what ways have you seen this to be true? What are the most significant barriers to love’s penetration?

Chapter 20 – The Power of Faith

23. Delio tells a story about a religious sister imprisoned by a grievance with another sister dead for ten years and argues that we must decide “to either live in the illusion of the past or to surrender to God, who is the power of the future.” (*page 133*).

How might this be applied to our lives?

Chapter 21 – Fire Burns and So Does Love

24. Comment upon the Delio quote below on the need to integrate the findings of evolution and transform religion:

Anyone who has faith in God without faith in the world, and, in particular, the world of matter, does not have faith in a *living* God. (*page 140*).

Chapter 22 – The Ineffable Bond of Love

25. What is your reaction to Delio’s comments about the relationship between technology and consumerism as a by product of Covid-19 as noted below?

The Covid-19 virus has unsettled the relationship between technology and consumerism, and we are not sure what this will mean for us. But it may invite us to slow down and consider the infinite value of human relationships. (*page 144*).

None

Chapter 23 – Despite the News, We Belong to One Another

26. Delio speaks about the role of religion in promoting a world that cooperates for the benefit of all creation:

We need to find a way to harness the mystical currents of the established religious traditions and refocus them on gathering the human community into a common spiritual

center so that cooperation and working together for the future may be enkindled. (page 152)

What might be required to implement this vision?

Chapter 24 – Praying in Teilhard’s Universe

27. As Delio describes, prayer for Teilhard is radically different than the traditional concept of one-on-one conversation with God. Rather it is a spiritual power to connect us with God and the earth to contribute to the evolution of a universe centered in Christ.

How do you react to Delio’s comments here?

Chapter 25 – Contemplation and Vision

28. Delio offers a different formula for social change. In our time, we seek to raise consciousness through public action that intends to directly create a vision that results in the needed change. She sees rather that “action must lead to contemplation, and contemplation must lead to new vision, and new vision must lead to new structures of relationship.” (page 165)

To what degree do you agree with her model?

Chapter 26 – Eucharist and God’s Love

29. Delio shares a Shabbat meal with her Jewish friends and then reflects on what Eucharist means in this new universe:

This is Eucharist in an unfolding universe: the bringing together of diverse elements, people, ideas, values, and traditions in the breaking of bread and the sharing of wine, toasting together to the fullness of life. (page 174)

What is your reaction to this divergent understanding of Eucharist?

Chapter 27 – Teilhard’s Troubled Worship

30. Delio speaks about the irrelevance of the Church in the world today noting how people look to technology such as Apple for transcend experiences. She states that “if the church died tomorrow, the world would likely express its sympathy, but not attend the funeral.” (page 177).

If she is correct, what must be done to restores the Church’s relevance?

Chapter 28 – Can Consumer People be Christmas people?

31. Delio turns her focus on the abject barren nature of consumer Christians not as much about the frenzy of gift giving but the unwillingness of accepting the Christ as a gift “freely given and graciously received.” (page 187).

What types of transformation are needed to change a “consumer people” into a “Christian people”?

Chapter 29 – Internet Easter

32. Reflecting on the Internet worship of the pandemic, Delio sees it as an opportunity to expand our consciousness of God’s presence in the world and be a means to see God in all creation beyond the physical structure of our churches.

To what degree does this resonate with you? What do you make of her argument?

Vespers

Chapter 30 – Radical Forgiveness – Lessons from Nature

33. Delio uses the example of nature’s resiliency as an example of the practice of forgiveness and believes that forgiveness would be humanity most important contribution to the healing of the world.

What experiences reflect this vision?

Chapter 31 – Costly Love

34. Delio wonders about what we are becoming with our technology and suggest that it is alienating us from our ability to forgive. She speaks about the movie “Railway Man” where a former prisoner of war in WWII Japan returns 40 years later and forgives the man who tortured him.

Delio asks: But if love is our truest nature and technology is changing that nature, how can we renew our deepest reality of love? (*page 207*). Reactions to that question?

Chapter 32 – Time to Become Ultrahuman?

35. Delio focuses upon contemplation as a key to transform our universe through love-energy of Omega-God. She sees meditation or contemplative prayer as possibly “the most important sources of energy for human evolution.” (*page 215*)

What might such a transformation look like in our spiritual lives?

Compline

Chapter 33 – Evolve or Be Annihilated

36. Delio contends that to survive we must accept that change (evolution) is permanent and that systems including religion and education must evolve or be annihilated. She quotes Thomas Berry that “we will go into the future as a single sacred community, or we will all perish in the desert.” (*page 225*).

What is your reaction to Berry’s quote?

Chapter 34 – Hope in a Time of Crisis

37. Delio argues for a radical shift in Christianity by moving God to the center of an evolving universe and making salvation a function of a deep interconnection of all rather than that of an individual.

How do you react to this shift? What would moving toward it mean for the Church?

Chapter 35 – Brother Mango and Eternal Love

38. Delio uses the death of her cat Mango to conclude her writings on the transformation of Christianity. She speaks about all creation having a “thisness” – a unique contribution to the universe.

What would it mean if we treated all creation as vehicles of love contributing to the love-energy of an evolving universe?