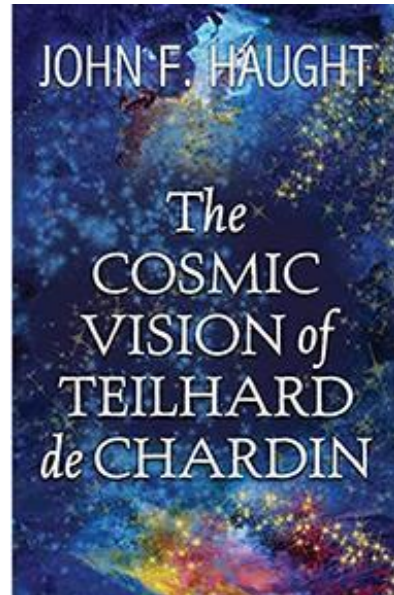


## A Part to Play in the Ongoing Creation Story

By Sister Louise Bernier

How wonderful it is when a book delivers what it promises, and that the promises kept are relevant to preparation and participation for Pope Francis' synod!

With his book, *The Cosmic Vision of Teilhard de Chardin*, author John F. Haught promises to be critical of Chardin's thought; to develop, enhance, and update Chardin's ideas in light of science and spirituality today; and to underline the importance of the fact that the universe is a work in progress that is still coming into being. This is important for all of us as citizens of the universe because we all have roles to play.



The author's updates to Chardin's thought are guided by the assertion that faithfulness to our tradition is better than static obedience to it. "Seeing differently" takes on enhanced meaning with this book! Although it is nice to have actually read Chardin and have a "sense of the whole of his thought," that is not necessary to understanding this book. Haught places his ideas in the context of the whole of Chardin's ideas, which he explains well.

This book lays out ideas clearly and in a way in which the reader is able to make them real and consider their implications. It offers the reader a way to enter into *how* Chardin thought about the universe and our place in it.

Pope Francis' synod is coming; grassroots-level preparation for it is just around the corner! But from the articles I have read, it appears that in our democratic United States, where the peoples' voices are supposed to be important, not much preparation seems to be taking place.

We sisters have a strong sense of wanting to make sure that each of us can see, taste, and share our "raisin in the pie." Fortunately, I have found an opportunity to participate with others in synod preparation. What opportunities exist elsewhere? How will we invite one another to participate? Do we want to? What do we want to offer?

Chapter 2 of *The Cosmic Vision of Teilhard de Chardin* offers a sea-change response. Will deconstructing our universe, right down to the earliest stuff, help us? We have just sent a space exploration ship toward the edge of the universe to do this. What we learn from this will enhance our understanding of and response to the universe, but what is it about that which will really move us outside of ourselves?

Think about salvation as a return to, or restoration of, an imagined, already perfect Garden of Eden with the sword of sin hanging over it, and its emphasis on individual salvation. Do we want this “return to the past” to continue to shape our Catholic-Christian response to our roles in the universe? I say, no, let’s not bury ourselves in the “tiny-nesses” of human failings!

Chardin’s sea change, which I hope to see, is that the universe is unfinished and we are called, not *pushed*, to engage in moving creation forward. Caring for creation then becomes more satisfying because it becomes more than restoring the earth to a past pristineness; it moves creation forward and it engenders hope.

The “switcheroo” here involves our being called to the Unknown, which forever will be a moving target. I’d love to see this new story of creation take on legs and become the “ongoing story of creation.” This is what Redemption feels like to me, and it involves a lot of letting go in order to take on a new universe view. I’d love to see Chardin’s ideas become practical reality in our world.

I have focused on Chapter 2, but there are 13 awe-inspiring chapters in this book. There are also many YouTube videos about Chardin, and with John Haught discussing Chardin. They may come off as “talking heads,” but the content is stunning, and seeing and hearing the author is a different experience from reading what he writes.

Transformation is not for the faint-hearted, and we should not underestimate the significance of our lives and participation in arenas, such as the synod, where our voices can be heard. Change needs to start somewhere; it needs to be broadcasted, and it involves seeing differently and more inclusively.

*John F. Haught’s The Cosmic Vision of Teilhard de Chardin is published by Orbis Books (2021) and is priced at \$26.00.*