

Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity we shall harness for God the energies of love and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.

—Teilhard de Chardin

### 1. Someday. . .

On the wall of my office is a print I purchased several years ago. It features a quotation of the Jesuit paleontologist-philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. The print is a beautiful piece of artwork created by Sister Theresa Eppridge in 1977. At the left, center and right are the words **SOME DAY FIRE**, written large in bright shades of yellow, orange and red, like the flames of a fire. Superposed on these in smaller dark blue letters are the words of the quotation itself:

Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity we shall harness for God the energies of love and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.<sup>1</sup>

Teilhard de Chardin's name at the bottom completes the print. My copy is signed and numbered. It is one of my most valued possessions.

Those words speak volumes. To one who is familiar with Teilhard's thinking they encapsulate the whole of his comprehensive and optimistic evolutionary vision. They show us a way—the best way in my judgment—to approach the problems of the destruction of the environment, the depletion of natural resources, the threat of a nuclear war, our alienation from one another, and the social injustices which so plague us today. To me they are words of hope. But we must learn to put them into practice if we are to survive and build a better world.

In Teilhard's vision, evolution is seen as a process directed toward a divine goal and unity which is the epitome of "differentiated union." He identified this goal with the One Personal God who is the beginning and the end of everything that is. Evolutionary progress is a convergent movement toward that end; it is made by promoting more diversity with a closer unity—materially, mentally, and spiritually. We can evolve in that direction by transforming our political, economic, and religious systems and structures so that they serve all people rather than only a few. It is achieved by caring for our neighbors, whoever they are, wherever they live, by helping them become all they are capable of becoming. Ultimately, as Teilhard shows us, genuine human progress