Daily Meditation Transcript 9/19/2021

Wisdom and the Feminine and Two Sisters Hildegard and Julian

Good morning.

Today we're celebrating the role that wisdom and feminist energy play in two sisters: Julian of Norwich in the 14th century, and her older sister, Hildegard of Bingen, the 12th century.

Hildegard, and I'm quoting from my recent book on Hildegard, of being a saint for our times, pages 86 and 87. Hildegard's first book, Scivias, which made her famous, took her 10 years to write.

Scivias means "know she, the ways, vias." And what she means by that title is "know the ways of folly versus the ways of wisdom."

So, the ways of wisdom are primary in Hildegard's consciousness, and she derived a lot of that love of wisdom from her prayers and meditations as a Benedictine abbess. And not because the Benedictines, like so many monastic orders, would sing the wisdom literature, the psalms, several times a day every day of the year.

And, for Hildegard, the ultimate wisdom is compassion. She talks about the law of the Samaritan, who led the wounded man into the inn. That compassion is a law, if you will, a new law, she says. This is a proper teaching of the church. And she says that the opposite of wisdom is folly. And what is folly? She says, "To lack motherly compassion." And whoever does this, she says, dies of thirst, dies of thirst.

So here she is in complete league with Julian of Norwich, who celebrates the motherhood of God, and again...synthesizes mothering, motherhood, with compassion. So, compassion, for both of these women, these mystics, is at the heart of motherhood, at the heart of divinity.

And, you know, when Jesus in Luke 6 says, "Be compassionate as Creator in heaven is compassionate," he's really invoking the feminine side of God. That compassion, coming from the words for womb in both Hebrew and Arabic, obviously implies people with wombs, which is to say women. For Hildegard, compassion is hands-on. She says, "Nothing, neither gold nor money, costly stones nor pearls, (I wish politicians would memorize this sentence), could hide from me the eyes of the poor, who weep because they lack life's necessities." And it's wisdom that puts order into things, and justice. And truth.

So, wisdom speaks through Hildegard. She is shouting, proclaiming the presence of wisdom. And wisdom is the most important person because she is personified in the Jewish scriptures. Aside from divinity itself.

So, to follow the way of wisdom, as laid out by Hildegard or by Julian, is to follow a path of compassion. And compassion is not just about feeling for others, it is doing something. And that doing something includes healing; it includes celebrating; and it includes bearing one another's burdens. But it also includes works of justice. And both of them are explicit about that. "God is justice," says Julian of Norwich, in the context of her talking about the motherly work of compassion.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.

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