

Daily Meditation 09/27/2021

Thomas Merton on the Divine Feminine, Part 2

Good morning.

We continue our meditations on the Divine Feminine with Thomas Merton, the Catholic monk of the 1960's. And early in the 1960's, Valerie Delacorte organized a movement called Women Strike for Peace. And Merton wrote a letter in May 1962, and in it you can really see the political implications of recovering a feminist consciousness in ourselves and in our understanding of divinity.

And this is what he said:

"Woman has been used shamelessly in our commercial society, and then this misuse has been deeply involved in falsity. Think, for instance, of advertising in which woman is constantly used as bait. Along with that, the mentality that is created for woman and forced on her complacently by the commercial world. She becomes herself a commodity--in a way, the symbol of all commodities. In the false image of woman, life itself is turned into a commodity, in its very source. Woman, too, has been used to create a kind of spiritual smokescreen behind which the reality of the power struggle evolves. Give the soldiers enough pin-up girls and they will go gladly into battle.

"Refuse any longer to be part of the image of woman that is created by the commercial world. I leave you to meditate on the implications of that. Your refusal to remain passive in the fantastic nonsense of the big campaign to sell shelters has been providential. You've reacted against one of the more ultimate commercial perversions of the sacred reality of the family. The springs of thought have been poisoned. Thank you for trying to help purify them."

It's a very strong letter, a very strong letter of encouragement to a very early leader of women's consciousness and women's rights, in feminist consciousness. So, he exhibits a critical approach not only to the use of women, but to the power gains going on behind it, including that of advertising, consumer capitalism, and militarism. And he genuinely encouraged women to take on leadership roles, praising this woman, as he did, for her refusal to remain passive.

In many ways then, Thomas Merton was a feminist, and an early feminist. And we can praise him for that. But also, as a theologian, he brings in the importance of the Divine Feminine to carry on the struggle for women, and of women, but also the struggle in men to displace the excessive patriarchy and to clean it up with the wisdom of women, and indeed with wisdom, who is feminine in our scriptures and traditions around the world.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.