

Daily Meditation 11/22/2021

Who is a Healthy Man? What is Healthy Masculinity?

Good morning.

One of the deep questions underlying the news this week is a question of what is healthy masculinity? Who are healthy men? And I think the spirit that forced through the entire trial about Rittenhouse, Kyle Rittenhouse, these weeks was anything but healthy. If I were trying to help that young man, I would certainly sit down with him and propose that shooting others is not the healthy way of asserting your manhood.

So in today's meditation, we call on the brilliant voice of Hildegard of Bingen. And she continually returns to the idea that manliness, since she uses that word, is equivalent to virtue.

There's a hidden strength within all of us, women and men, that we call virtue. So, it's developing discipline within oneself that is the beginning of becoming an adult. And that, of course, is what rites of passage are for.

And I think that the sad story of Mr. Rittenhouse, and so many others in our time, is that they are deprived of rites of passage. And as a result, they grew up very angry, and unable to express their deepest emotions.

So, I think one of the biggest gifts that could be given to a lot of these young people would be a sweat lodge, which would put them in a place where they go to the edge, where they are tested about their own inner strength versus inner weaknesses. And that's what a serious a rite of passage does and accomplishes.

But also, in today's meditation, I simply invoke *Webster's Dictionary*. And the relation between virility and virtue is so basic. Because it's not just me who is saying the relationship between virtues and values is so valuable. This, in fact, can be found in Webster's Dictionary, that the word "virtue" from "virtus," and from the word "vir," which means "man" in Latin. The dictionary itself says this is about strength, manliness, and virtue. And to learn more, it says go to the word "virile." It's all there. It's in our language!

But are we teaching this in our educational systems? Are we teaching any values in our educational systems?

And then it goes on to talk about how morality is in conformity to a standard of rights. It is about particular moral excellence, manly strength, or courage.

These are the words from *Webster's*: manly strength or courage. "Valor" they give us as a synonym. The commendable quality or trait, merit, the capacity to act, potency. All this is from the dictionary.

And under the word "virile," it talks about having the nature or properties, qualities of a man, energetic, vigorous, characteristic of, associated with men, masculine, masterful, forceful. The quality or state of being virile, manhood, manly vigor, masculinity.

All this is lacking in the actions of a person who brings an AR-15 to a demonstration. As someone said the other day, the Second Amendment, the gun thing, has swallowed up the First Amendment, which is the right of all of us to protest in nonviolent ways.

So, there's so much to be unpacked here, at a moment like this. And I think that really gets down to the question of values. Are we teaching values? Are we teaching young men what it means to be a man and, of course young women, too? But especially it's the men who are showing their foolish side at a time like this. And if we're not, we should go to places where we can learn to teach values.

And that's what my project, The A.W.E. Project, was all about: Reinventing Education, Reinventing the Human. Because they laid out their 10 qualities, 10 values that we can talk about in a secular society, in a pluralistic society. The language I use is not religious language.

But we can all be wrestling with those themes of cosmology and ecology, of character development, of chaos, of compassion, community, courage, critical thinking, and the rest--and creativity, of course--that I think really name the deeper part of ourselves, and the better part of ourselves.

And this is the call to values, the call to adulthood.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.