

Daily Meditation 12/23/2021

Christ Child Vs. the Unholy Masculine? A Poem by Leonardo Boff

Good Morning.

We're talking about Christmas today, and how it offers very much an alternative to the unholy masculine. And I lead with a poem from Leonardo Boff, where he talks about how only God wanted to be a boy, that boys are yearning to be kings, and kings yearn to be like God. And I refer to Philippians II; I want to share that with you. And then I'll turn to Meister Eckhart, whom I also invoke.

But this is of Paul, writing to the Philippians:

"If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all, or the spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind."

Notice the values and images there: about love, spirit, things in common, tenderness, sympathy, and being united in love with the common mind. All these are definitely not authoritarian and fascist symbols.

"That is the one thing which would make me completely happy," says Paul: "there must be no competition among you, no conceit, but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first, but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead."

That's pretty good advice. And again, it's about a circle, creating a circle, not a hierarchy.

"In your minds, you must be the same as Christ Jesus." And then he launches into a poem that was very likely sung in the early Christian church; he may have composed it, we're not sure.

"His state was divine --" (talking about Jesus) "yet he did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave and became as men are --"

and at Christmas time, as boys are, as children are.

"--And being as all people are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross."

So I feel that teaching, in this poem of Leonardo Boff, God becoming a boy.

And now let us turn to Meister Eckhart, because he takes up very strongly the theme of the royal person: of how all of us are royal persons or kings, how there is not one king who lords over us. And this is in my collection of Eckhart's poems with commentaries, Eckhart's sermons with commentaries, called *Passion for Creation: The Earth-honoring Spirituality of Meister Eckhart*.

This is sermon number 36, which I call "Everyone an Aristocrat, Everyone a Royal Person." And it begins this way, from a sentence from Luke 19:12:

"Our Lord says, in the Gospel, "A man of royal birth went to a distant country to be appointed King, and afterward, he returned." And here's what Eckhart says:

"Our Lord teaches us in these words how royal people have been created in their nature, how divine is a state to which they can rise through grace, and in addition, how people are to reach that point. In fact, a large part of the Holy Scripture touches upon these words."

So he's saying that the royal person theme is very common in Scripture. And he says,

"The inner person, which is hidden within us, is often called a new person, a heavenly person, a young person, a friend, and a royal person."

So he's inviting us to discover that inner person within ourselves. It is royal. That's the person Christ is talking about, he says, when he says "a man of royal birth went to a distant country to be appointed king, and afterward he returned." So he spends much of his sermon exegeting what a royal person is, and especially, he talks about what the royal person gives birth to.

He says that you want to develop your talents, as Jesus talks about, not bury them, and he says that humility is a characteristic we have from the earth. And of course, that statement comes from Latin word for "humus," as Earth, that gives us the word "humble," or humility. And he says that

"The best fruit is to be born. What is this best of fruits? It is nothing less than the Son of God. The birth of God takes place in us, and it bears the Son of God, bears the kingdom of God in our midst. The seed of the divine nature is God's Son, the word of God. And we are all here to give this birth, this birth to this royal person who is the Christ, but born of ourselves, who are also royal people."

And of course, there are tremendous political consequences of this.

Eckhart says we need to practice equality in human society, because Christ's nobility belongs to all of us, and is equally near to us, to him as much as to me. And we need to practice equality. You are to love, esteem, and consider all people like yourself; what happens to another, be a bad or good, should be for you as if it happened to you. So this is an absolute calling forth of compassion and of justice, and of the dignity of all of us, not one, or a few, towering over others.

But this is a truly democratic view of the world, 700 years before Thomas Jefferson, and it's baked into the Christian story of Christmas: Christ becomes a boy, a child like the rest of us.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.