

Daily Meditation 01/27/22

Thich Nhat Hanh and the Sacred Masculine

Good morning.

We continue our meditations with Thich Nhat Hanh, and today's theme is Thich Nhat Hanh and the Sacred Masculine.

Over my left shoulder here is the good Buddha and Thomas Merton, who was a good friend of Thich Nhat Hanh. A very good friend, in fact Thich Nhat Hanh nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize.

And obviously, we're living in a time of immense confusion about masculinity, an immense exaggeration of the shadow side to masculinity. We often call it authoritarianism or fascism or power for power's sake, or the reptilian brain unleashed, call it what you will.

Obviously, we search, we hunt and gather for other versions of manhood, and masculinity. And, of course, masculinity applies to women as well as men. So women can be bearing a toxic masculinity and men can. And both can develop a healthier masculinity.

And I think that's part of the many gifts that Thich Nhat Hanh gives us as I lay out in today's meditation, calling on six of the archetypes of the sacred masculine. And a seventh test, if you will, is that of bearing both the feminine and masculine together.

So, here are some teachings from Thich Nhat Hanh that awaken us and bring consciousness alive. He says:

"Being still is a practice of calming and quieting the mind."

That's what contemplation is.

"The stillness helps us become aware of what is going on inside us, and around us."

...inside us and around us. So it gives us a breathing space, to understand the news of the day, whether it's uplifting or discouraging. And the key is that it calms us inwardly, so that we're not busy projecting or overreacting to the news of the day.

And in talking about presence, he says,

"All wonders of life are available in the present moment."

...all wonders of life are available in the present moment. That is the via positiva statement of a mystic.

"When our mind dwells in the here and the now, we can be in touch deeply with life in us, and all around us."

...in us and all around us. So to be able to settle into the here and now. Thich Nhat Hanh is not alone in teaching this; Meister Eckhart teaches it very vividly as well. But here's how Thich Nhat Hanh puts it in terms of practice. He said,

Mindfulness is the key. When you become aware of something, you'll begin to have enlightenment. When you drink a glass of water and are aware that you are drinking a glass of water, deeply with your whole being, enlightenment is there in its initial form. To be enlightened is always to be enlightened about something. I am enlightened about the fact that I'm drinking a glass of water. I can obtain joy, peace and happiness, just because of that enlightenment.

But notice: one thing I love about Thich Nhat Hanh is that there's nothing esoteric about him really. He's teaching ordinary people about ordinary things like drinking a glass of water, and about what goes on inside, how we can make this glass of water a moment of enlightenment and if that's true of a glass of water, it is true of so many other things: of all our relationships really, they become more substantive.

He says:

"The substance of a Buddha is mindfulness. Every time you practice conscious breathing, you are a living Buddha."

...a living Buddha. Previously we wrote of his teaching about being a living Christ, and for him, they're the same thing, he said.

To go back to yourself and dwell in mindfulness is the best practice in difficult moments. Mindfulness of breathing is your island, where you can be safe and happy, knowing that whatever happens, you are doing your best things. This is a way to take refuge in the Buddha, not just as a devotion, but as a transformational practice.

...not just as devotion, but as transformation: to be fully present, and to contain things in you that are happening, and you in things; to be present, to be empty, and to be filled. All these energies and flows and processes are possible when we can be mindful.

And of course, that presumes we be mind empty, as well, the emptying and the filling. That's not that different from the Christian teaching of kenosis, about how Christ was emptied a lot to become a human being, subject to suffering like all of us, but there is also a filling going on there, because he was in touch with something greater than himself: the breath, the Yahweh, the breath of the universe, sometimes called God, or spirit.

Thank you, we'll see you tomorrow.