

Daily Meditation 01/28/2022

Thich Naht Hanh — “Greater than a Miracle” ~~ Thomas Aquinas

Good morning.

Today we're meditating together on Thomas Aquinas and Thich Nhat Hanh. And that's a wonderful thing to do today, because today happens to be the feast day of Thomas Aquinas. That is January 28. And to be honest, I didn't know this when I was writing ...well, I'd forgotten that when I was writing this daily meditation on how Thich Nhat Hanh meets Thomas Aquinas. So wonderful synchronicity there.

These two great souls, and most people may not think of them in the same thought...well, I guess I'm not like most people! But...because most people think of Aquinas as this extreme intellectual, and Thich Nhat Hanh, of course, is doing this for practice.

But the truth is, both were monks and living in monastic communities, or if you will, friar communities with Thomas Merton...er, with Thomas Aquinas. And of course, the Dominicans were trying to combine contemplation and action.

That's exactly what Thich Nhat Hanh was trying to do when he invented the term and the concept of engaged Buddhism: that for him, it was not enough that monks just chant and practice mindfulness and contemplation, but that they were here to serve the larger community.

And that is certainly true of Aquinas, and the Dominicans, too. Especially in the early time of the 13th century, when it was quite a radical thing to do, because they were, like the Franciscans, reacting against the monastic tradition of 800 years or so, that was more monks hanging out with monks.

But in today's meditation, I invoke Thomas Aquinas to grasp more fully the beauty that passed our way in the person and work and the moving on, in his death, of Thich Nhat Hanh. And I thought this observation by Aquinas, which I love because it's so startling and profound, applied directly to Thich Nhat Hanh.

"It is a great thing to do miracles, but it is a greater thing to live virtuously."

Thich Nhat Hanh lived virtuously. And he shared his concern about the earth, and his teachings of how to remain peaceful in the midst of warfare and troubles and the rest, with as many people as he could, and in founding the community that he did, not only in France, but also in North America and other places.

So, so many people have responded to his teachings and to his personhood, to his beauty. And that to live a life like that, of such strength and generosity and wisdom is, in Aquinas' words a greater thing than a miracle.

So Thich Nhat Hanh's not only a miracle, he's bigger than a miracle, more wonderful than a miracle. And I love the reality of that statement from Aquinas, that virtue is sometimes hard to come by. And we're all called to live virtue in our own way.

And remember, too, we've been talking about the sacred masculine. Yesterday's meditation was on Thich Nhat Hanh and the sacred masculine, and part of the sacred masculine is virtue. That comes to the word for Man, "vir." It's true manliness, it is true virility, even Webster's Dictionary says that.

And as Aquinas says in today's meditation, human virtue is a participation in divine power. So it's a different kind of power from that which...what should I say? The noisy politics of our time and how they define power. It's not that kind of power. It's an inner power, that brings the beauty and caring and compassion and justice with it. So all that is celebrated by both Thomas Aquinas and by Thich Nhat Hanh, by living that fully.

So to everyone I say happy feast day, Thomas Aquinas, but also happy passing and passage from Thich Naht Hanh. They are brothers.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.