

Daily Meditations 03/05/22

“I’m Willing to Freeze for Peace”: Sacrifice & Generosity

Good morning.

We are meditating today on the return of the need for sacrifice and the virtue of generosity. We see it going on in Ukraine under very extreme circumstances.

But not just Ukraine, Europe itself is going to suffer from the sanctions that they're putting on President Putin. And America will be suffering from it, but on a lesser scale. One of the things that may well happen in America is the continuing rise of cost for fuel.

But instead of complaining, feeling sorry for ourselves, let's step back for a minute, and realize what others are sacrificing for a common good...a common good.

And I do think that America has been spoiled. And there's a lot of self-pity. Self-pity always goes with patriarchy. And there's a lot of patriarchy, so there must be a lot of self-pity. And, of course, there's a lot of raucous screaming in our political system at this time, and projection onto others.

But I think we should calm down and just ask, be sure to ask, what's going on here, why we're being asked to sacrifice and to be generous at this time in our troubled history as human beings.

The same is true, of course, not just about the price of the Ukrainian war, but also about the requirements of eco justice, and moving from matricide and ecocide to a more sustainable and loving relationship with Mother Earth.

In my book on evil, I close with the section on generosity, because I do not think that our consumer capitalist culture has taught us very much about generosity. We've been taught a lot about hoarding, and very little about sacrifice, taught a lot about buying bigger and bigger houses, and not so much about how to live simpler lifestyles.

The word "generous" is such a very interesting word in English. It comes from two Latin words: "gener" which means to be get or produce or create, or cause to exist, to bring to life, to generate. And the other word is "genus," which means birth, descent, origin, family, father, nation, stock, offspring, race, kind, class, sort, the words "generate" or "generative" derived from the word "genus" or kind.

So the word "genus" is about to be part of a kind, part of a group to have procreated, and given birth. So there's a tremendous affirmation of our powers of creativity in this term, "generosity" and all of its related terms, all these other words, it brings up so much. It takes generosity to be generative... takes generosity to be generative.

The English word "generous" itself has many meanings: magnanimous, kindly, liberal, and giving, open-handed, marked by abundance or ample proportions, copious.

And Thomas Aquinas says that magnanimity is the greatest of all the virtues. It comes from two words: for "magna anima," a great soul...a great soul, a big soul. So it implies excellence and gratitude. We give away when we are grateful.

And Aquinas says it is difficult to be magnanimous... it is difficult to be magnanimous. No evil person is ever magnanimous. No evil person is ever magnanimous. So you fight evil with magnanimity. You fight evil with generosity and that creates the context in which we're willing to do a little sacrificing at this time in history, both for the sustainability of Mother Earth and future generations, but also for the sustainability of democracy and future generations.

Instead of feeling sorry for ourselves, because the gasoline might go a little higher. Let's remind ourselves that we're capable of generosity.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.