

Daily Meditation 04/02/2022

Evil Nearer to Home: Genocide and Papal Apology

Good morning.

In today's meditation we are reflecting on evil and the evil done to indigenous peoples and their children over the centuries--especially those children that were taken away from their tribes forcefully and put in schools usually hundreds of miles away from their families and their tribes.

And I allude to this important book on the trauma suffered from that: *Flying Horse: Stories of Healing the Soul Wound*, by Dr. Schindler, a psychiatrist who lived on the Navajo reservation for 25 years, as well as several other indigenous reservations in New Zealand and in California.

And here's the background to the title of the book, *Flying Horse*.

She went to visit one of these boarding schools and "during an open mic session, a young non-native woman got up and began telling the story of how she'd been sent off to a modern reformed school in the U.S. She told of starving, being bitten by scorpions, and being told horrible things about herself.

Then two elder native women told them about their relatives who had been confined at the Carlisle boarding school, and how their traumatic experiences had affected subsequent generations in their families."

She visited the buildings on campus.

"There were bars in the windows and doors of the rooms of the so-called "problem" Indian children. I was stunned at the reality of the cells."

This is page 146 and 147 of the book.

"Leaving the dungeon area, the group had started to walk across the manicured lawns to the cemetery, where there were 283 graves of Indian children. Rows and rows of small white stone markers fill the cemetery, each with the name and date carved into its surface.

We stayed at the cemetery while our prayers were said and offerings made through the Sacred Hoop. We walked around the cemetery, taking photographs of gravestones, trying to record as many names as possible.

One young woman was crying. When I asked her why, she took me to a grave with a name Lucy Pretty Eagle. She told me that she had read a book about the young girl who was buried there."

Lucy had a fainting spell when she was in the school. And this was not an unfamiliar occurrence for her. She appeared not to be breathing. But her friend, who would always take care of her, was gone at the time. And so Lucy was buried alive.

"She died at the age of 10, just a few months after entering the Carlisle boarding school. Others present in the graveyard reported various experiences that led them to believe the spirits of the little children were gathered with us.

After spending a long time photographing the gravestones, I walked alone on a path thinking that if any of the little spirits would like me to name my horse after them, to let me know. I'd owned my mustang for over a year but I never felt like he had the right name. Two steps later, I found myself standing in front of a grave marked Samuel Flying Horse, 1883."

She returned to the grave the next day with two Corey horses to put on the grave.

"Back at home I tried to find out about Samuel Flying Horse, but his story has been lost.

We can imagine his life at the boarding school. I sometimes wonder if he spent time in the dark, cold cell reserved for students who had misbehaved. I think of how it might have been for him to die at Carlisle, far from his parents.

And I think about his parents and how they felt when their son was taken to boarding school. Were they notified of his death? If so, how must they have dealt with it, not having been there to comfort him.

But the story's lost. I imagine him as a very brave little boy. In my heart and imagination, it lives on in my mustang," whom she named after Flying Horse.

"I do believe that Samuel Flying Horse's spirit led me to the grave and approves of having his name carried on by a brave, intelligent, gorgeous, and graceful horse, which represents freedom. And I dedicate this book to him because he deserved freedom as well. And his short life and suffering should be remembered."

So these stories, poignant stories, are no less poignant than the stories we're receiving from Ukraine today. That evil has its place in human history. And so many tribes and institutions, and mistakes, choices that humans make.

And that's why we don't want to project all our evil upon a Putin in our time or on a Hitler in a previous generation. We want to realize that the spirit, shadow of evil, is present in all times. And all of us can yield to it or succumb to it.

And this is why part of being a spiritual warrior is to be alert, to be alert, and to look for evil in our own time and in our own structures. And in those from the past.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.