

Daily Meditation 06-23-22

Hildegard on Angels

Good morning.

Today we are celebrating some teachings from Hildegard of Bingen about angels. And they are very rich. She describes them this way: she says,

God says, I have created mirrors to look upon my face, to observe all of the never-ending wonders of my origins. I have prepared for myself these mirror beings --

...mirror beings....

...to join in songs of praise. Through my word which without beginning was and is in me, I let a powerful light go forth in these innumerable hosts, the angels.

...innumerable hosts, the angels.

And God created light, invisible illumination, which clings to the living, flying spheres, the angels. Oh you angels, whose being streams out from your countenance. You alone glimpse the most internal power of creation which the father's heart breathes. You see it as in a face.

And another definition of "angel" from Hildegard:

Angels are "a light, on which the spheres of life would depend."

So she's describing angels as streams of light. Streams of light come out of them; they are mirrors. And streams of light come out of them. Spheres of light come out of them. You may even say that they are two-way mirrors. And in another place, she talks about good works. And this is what she says:

Just as God is praised by the angels, and as the divine creation is acknowledged through this praise, they sound His praise with zithers and harmony and all voices of praise. Because this is their actual office. So also God is to be praised by humanity.

"For humans, too, serve two purposes," she says: "they sing God's praise, and they practice good works."

To praise and to work. You may say the via positiva is praise, and the via transformativa, which is work.

"So God is recognized through their praise," she says, "and through the good works, we can see in them God's wonders."

So there's a wonder in the works of the world, including the works of humanity. And humanity is a work of the Divine.

"So humans," she says, "are angelic through their praise –"

...Humans are angelic through their praise, we carry that angelic dimension in ourselves...

"...but through their holy deeds they are human."

So humanity's works are very special. And our praise is like the angels, but our works are unique to humanity.

As a whole, they are the full work of God, for in praise, and in deeds all of God's works are brought to completion through these humans.

So in a way, Hildegard is very much elevating the vocation of the human. On the one hand, we're like the angels because we praise, but on the other we do these works, many kinds of works. And that's special to the humans, that angels do not do such a variety of works, she feels. Angels commit themselves to one location while humans occupy in our work worlds, many, many different dimensions: from raising children to making a living, to being a citizen and so forth.

So she's saying that the *via positiva* is half of our task on earth, and we share that with the angels, but the other half is our actions. In this way, we're here to praise and to work. This almost parallels the Benedictine spirituality to which Hildegard was committed.

She's really saying that human beings are creative and angels are not; that human beings have many choices in life to make, but angels really make just one choice.

So there's lots to ponder here. And it does shed light on our calling and vocation as human beings, asking, whom are we serving? And what are we really accomplishing with our work? And how important is praise in our existence? How well are we doing?

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.