

Daily Meditation 07/25/2022

Pope Francis' "Penitential Voyage" to the First Peoples of Canada

Good morning.

Today we are remembering the Pope's visit to Canada, which he himself called a "penitential visit" to apologize for the century-long--more than a century--abuse of indigenous children. Stealing them from their families and from their culture, from their tribes, from their religion, and putting them in Catholic schools in order to indoctrinate them in Western ways and religion.

This happened not just with Catholics, but other religious denominations, and the government itself. A state did the same thing. And this happened, of course, not just in Canada, but in the United States as well. Canada has faced up to it more directly than has our country.

But I make the point that this doctrine of discovery, which consists of three papal bulls, gave the blank check, the green light, to this kind of activity.

And I speak about this in my book of *Julian of Norwich*, in the conclusion, especially, because her theology was not one of capturing people to redeem them. It began with the sacredness of creation that all peoples share in common: Creation Spirituality.

But it was in her time, during the bubonic plague, as Thomas Berg points out, that Creation Spirituality, in fact, was killed, for centuries, because of fear and angst of the bubonic plague. It destroyed people's trust of nature. But not Julian's. Julian lived through the bubonic plague. She was seven when it hit, and she lived into her 80s. And it kept coming back in waves throughout her lifetime. But she thoroughly developed a creation spirituality theology and consciousness.

Now, she was not listened to. It took 300 years for her book to be translated, to be published. And in those 300 years, this kind of barbaric religion dominated wherever Europeans went around the world--in the islands, North and South America, Central America, and Africa, too.

So let me share with you a few teachings from these papal bulls.

In 1452, Pope Nicholas V issued a papal bull, *Dum Diversas*, to authorize the king of Portugal to redeem any Saracens and Muslims and pagans and any other non-believers to "perpetual slavery." This, of course, facilitated the Portuguese slave trade from West Africa.

In 1455, three years later, the same pope delivered the bull, *Romanus Pontifex*, to Catholic nations of Europe that encouraged enslavement of native and non-Christian peoples in Africa and eventually the New World.

He called the king to “invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ, wheresoever placed in the kingdom, dukedom, principalities, dominion, possession, now movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them, and reduce their persons to perpetual slavery.”

"Enemies of Christ." Did Christ have enemies in these places?

In 1493, the year after Columbus set for America, Pope Alexander VI encouraged the Spanish kings, Queen Isabella and Ferdinand, with his bull, *Inter Caetera*.

"Barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith." He urged them to "spread the Christian rule." And he heralded "our beloved son, Christopher Columbus for discovering very remote islands, and even many land sites hitherto had not been discovered by others, where dwell very many people living in peace, as reported, going unclothed and not eating flesh. We do believe in one God, the Creator in heaven, but they need to be instructed 'in the name of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

Well, first of all, Columbus didn't “discover” these people, he stumbled upon them when he was lost.

But notice, again, the theology of Christ as a savior. Not Christ as Mother as Julian developed in the 15th century. Not Christ as teacher of compassion, and justice, and love. And notice, too, the native people are already living in peace!

This doctrine spread, because it served, of course, imperial interests. “In 1823, it was endorsed by Chief Justice John Marshall, and has been used primarily to invalidate and ignore aboriginal possession of lands in favor of colonial, post-colonial governments.”

Bad news indeed. Time for deep apologies, for burning the discovery of doctrine, papal bulls.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.