

Daily Meditation 10-05-22

More Spiritual Lessons from Animals

Good morning.

We continue our meditation on animals and what they gift us with regarding spirituality. In today's meditation, we especially point out the dimensions of sensitivity and compassion, and of course, the beauty of animals. And also their sensuousness, inviting us, who are also mammals like they are, to be in touch with our sensuality, our sensuousness.

For many Western Christians it's very difficult, because they've been instructed not by Jesus or the Jewish tradition in the Bible, but by theologians like St. Augustine, and others who bought in quite fully to the Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophical system that downgrades matter and the sensual and puts it actually in conflict with the spiritual.

So this is difficult for some Christians to understand. But Julian of Norwich, building on the nondualism of Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart, is very explicit about the spirituality of sensuality. Remember that she was the first woman to write a book in English.

And so in many ways, she's giving a nondualistic language spin on our sensuality. When she says things like, "God is in our sensuality," for some theologians that is very hard to take.

And I tell a story in my book on *Julian of Norwich: Wisdom in a Time of Pandemic and Beyond*, about a former professor of mine, who when I wrote a book about sensual spirituality, called *Whee! We, Wee All the Way Home: A Guide to Sensual Prophetic Spirituality*, he gave me a call from his place in the Medieval Institute in Toronto, Canada, and said he'd never talk to me again because it put the words "sensuality" and "spirituality" in the same sentence. And he hung up the phone and he never did talk to me again. But obviously, he had never read Julian of Norwich, even though his specialty was 14th century science.

And it just shows how deeply the patriarchal dualism has become embedded in a lot of thinking and the rest. Julian says,

God is in our sensuality, and I understand that our sensuality is grounded in nature, in compassion, and in grace.

This is from page 77 of my book.

And this enables us to receive gifts that lead to a everlasting life. For I saw that inner sensuality, God, is.

So you see she's absolutely melting the distinction between the sensual and the spiritual. She says

Here exists a beautiful oneing --

...oneing, that's a word she invented, o-n-e-i-n-g.

...A beautiful oneing that was made by God between the body and the soul.

Now, Augustine said, "the soul makes war with the body." Julian is saying the opposite.

There is a beautiful oneing made by God, between the body and soul.

She says,

In the same point that our soul is made sensual, in the same spot is the city of God established from without beginning. God comes into the seat and never will remove it.

So God is a kind of glue that keeps body and soul, matter and spirit together. She writes,

God is the ground on which our soul stands. And God is the means whereby our substance and our sensuality are kept together, so as never to be apart.

Now of course, Julian is famous for her relationship with a cat; that she lived as an anchoress which is essentially alone, walled up in a cell adjacent to a church. But she had a cat. And the cat was obviously a teacher to her, a friend and a teacher, and she was obviously impressed by the sensuality and the spirituality of the cat, among other things.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.