

Daily Meditation 10/19/2022

The Death of a Prophet, Albert Nolan, OP

Good morning.

Today is a special day I think, because Father Albert Nolan, South African Dominican, died yesterday, the age of 86. And he was an amazing human being.

He was very much involved in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, which, of course, was a dangerous thing to be involved in. He had to go underground to escape the South African Security Police for his activism, his sacred activism. But he also wrote several important books, especially his book, *Jesus before Christianity*. And we'll be talking about that book in the next several Daily Meditations.

Also, I had a relationship with him which was very important, not only because I read his works, and especially *Jesus before Christianity*, which was such an important book I felt that it was required reading in our Institute of Culture and Creation Spirituality, our master's program. And even today, like I was rereading it, and it's so pertinent today. And his life is so pertinent to what we're struggling with today in terms of democracy in America, in terms of the upcoming elections.

So I want to share with you a little more about his life and work that is not included in the meditation today.

But one thing that deserves attention from us today is this award that he was given by the South African government in 2003. The Order of Luthuli in Silver.

And the President of South Africa said, I'm giving the award to Father Nolan. "His lifelong dedication to the struggle for democracy, human rights, and justice, and for challenging the religious dogma, especially the theological justification for apartheid."

That was the acknowledgement and the award that he received. This marvelous summary of his life and his work and his actions.

But also, we are told that he was, in addition to being national chaplain for the National Catholic Federation of Students from 1973 to 1980 in South Africa.... And it "was formed after Black students in 1976 began organizing themselves in separate formations as black consciousness arose and flourished.

He was instrumental in establishing young Christian students in 1977 in South Africa. After, he attended an international movement of Catholic students in Lima, Peru and was inspired there by Gustavo Gutierrez," who is regarded as one of the founders of liberation theology, and who is ending his life in France, having become a Dominican, also. One reason being that the Opus Dei cardinal of Peru gave him constant trouble, drove him really out of his own country.

But the YCS Student Young Christian students movement "affiliated itself to the United Democratic Front in 1983 to oppose the Parliament, which was apartheid-driven, and united more than 400 organizations across all sectors of society in the struggle for "a non-racial, non-sexist and united South Africa."

All that was a lot of the work of Albert Nolan.

He offered his support to activists, especially those who became victims of the apartheid regime's violent and repressive Security Police. He was part of a secret underground network that managed logistics, including transportation, movement of activists, etc. in South Africa. Says "the full extent of his role in these networks is not known. Much of the work was done on a disciplined need-to-know basis."

And as I mentioned, he was a novice master and a student master, meaning he worked with the young Dominicans a lot. But he was elected provincial three different times. And he turned down the post of Master of the Order, the head of the entire Dominican Order. He obviously felt that staying in his work in South Africa was more important than wrestling with inquisitors and inquisitor wannabes in Rome.

A true human being, a true Christian, and a true Dominican in the best sense of the word.

Father Albert Nolan, thank you.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.