

Daily Meditation 10/20/2022

Albert Nolan, OP, Prophetic Activist and Author, continued

Good morning.

We are honoring and celebrating again the work and the person of Father Albert Nolan, a very fine Dominican who worked on behalf of the oppressed under apartheid in South Africa for many, many years.

And I did have an encounter with him. Two encounters, really, if you will. One is in studying his work, and especially his book, *Jesus before Christianity*. But the other was a story I tell about sitting down with him when I was expelled from the Dominican Order, when he happened to be visiting in Oakland where I lived, and we had tea together in a cafe in Oakland.

And it was very forthright and direct. And I told him that I was considering becoming an Episcopal priest, because I had done some research and found that I was radioactive after having been silenced and then expelled from the order by Cardinal Ratzinger and the American Dominicans. And then no bishop would take me because I was too hot to handle. And I said, Well, fine, I can just go about my business, and priesthood is not part of my complete identity by any means.

However, I had finished my book, *The Reinvention of Work*, the last chapter being on reinventing ritual and liturgy. And six young Anglicans from Sheffield, England flew in to meet with me at a conference that I was part of on Creation Spirituality in Seattle.

And, to make long story short, they presented me with what they were calling the planetary mass-- planetary mass, which was in essence, bringing rave into literate Western liturgy, rave being dance and DJ and VJ and rap. In other words, postmodern and premodern, because dance is a premodern way to pray. Postmodern premodern art forms.

And this is a big part of what I was calling for to reinvent ritual. So they were already doing it on the ground. And make long story short, I visited Sheffield, and I was very impressed by their mass and by the community that built up and asked, "How can I help?"

And they said, "Well, you could become an Episcopal priest and lead interference for us. Because you get what we're doing. A lot of people don't. We're already using a theology of Cosmic Christ, for example.

So, I thought about it and prayed about it and realized, well, the Pope didn't need me anymore, if that's what Rome told me. So I approached the bishop, Bishop Swing, the Episcopal bishop in San Francisco. And he was very supportive.

And I said, "I want to become an Episcopal priest, but only to work with young people, to reinvent forms of worship." And he said, go for it, gave me a green light.

So anyway, I was thinking through all this when I sat down with Albert Nolan. And Albert Nolan, one of his contributions to theology and theology on the ground was what he called the orthopraxis, but I also call orthopraxis instead of orthodoxy. That is, religion is not just about doctrines, getting doctrines right, it's about getting the practice right.

But a big part of his consciousness was deep ecumenism. Of course, he had worked in the struggle for justice and apartheid alongside people like Bishop Tutu and others from different religions who also saw the horror of the injustice.

So he was not at all fazed when I proposed that I think I have to become Episcopalian. And he got very excited. And he said, 'That's perfect. That's perfect, because what Rome wants to do with you is to isolate you. By joining another Christian community, they can't do that.' You will... foil them? Anyway, they will fail.

And so that was a big part of my decision really, that a man of his stature, whom I admired both as a theologian and as an activist, truly got excited and encouraged me.

So, in today's meditation, I also begin to share some of his teachings from the book *Jesus before Christianity*. And remember, before Christianity means before the Roman Empire was inherited by the church in the fourth century, before the Constantinian era. And by going back, before that time, we're getting much closer to the real Jesus, the historical Jesus and the Jewish Jesus.

That's another point that Albert Nolan stressed was the importance of recovering the Jewish Jesus. And this is something I've always stressed as well. It's a big part of Creation Spirituality.

So again, I thank Albert Nolan. And blessings to you all.

See you tomorrow. Thank you.