

Daily Meditation 12/13/2022

Merton on Advent, Night and Repose as Feminine

Good morning.

In today's meditation we continue our journey through Advent, through this dark time of the year, through winter, calling on Thomas Merton for his insights and his special insights today around the divine feminine.

This winter time has something very feminine about and it is significant that in the Roman Catholic Church the feast day of December 8, the feast day of the Immaculate Conception, occurs at this time.

And yesterday was the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. So I think that's another instance of the naming of this season as profoundly feminine.

And in his great poem on Hagia Sophia, Holy Wisdom, which I draw from in today's meditation, he has more to say about the Divine Feminine at this time. He talks about how the feminine principle is in divinity, three persons each at the same time are Sophia or Wisdom and Manifest. And he compares Sophia and Wisdom to the Tao of Taoism.

But he calls the Tao "the nameless pivot of all being in nature." Of course, the Tao is feminine also, a great mother, understood as such by the Chinese tradition that gives birth to it.

And this wonderful tradition of Hagia Sophia. He says (and I'm citing from my book on page 163, here in my book on Merton).

Now the Blessed Virgin is the one created being who in herself realizes perfectly all that is hidden in Sophia. She is a kind of personal manifestation of Sophia.

And, of course, part of Mary's presence in the Gospels is her very strong statement in Luke, early in Luke's gospel, what we call the Magnificat, where she comes out strongly in favor of the poor and against the privileged classes in the world, so she has a strong prophetic dimension to her.

And of course, that is part of the wisdom tradition of Israel, that told that "wisdom is a friend of the prophets"... a friend of the prophets... she is an ally of the prophets, that prophetic call, to speak truth, to speak justice, to speak truth to power, to interfere, as Rabbi Heschel says. All that masculine energy of spiritual warriorhood is integral to the Mary figure in Christianity, and of course, to the entire prophetic tradition.

So, Wisdom is not some kind of femme fatale, or sweetness to be found in the feminine. There is this profound love of the poor, as Merton talks about today, about divinity as a dark, nameless one who is homeless, destitute, without papers, in exile, and with dusty feet, that is part of divinity and that is part of the feminine side of God.

Merton calls on the teaching of Julian of Norwich, that God is our mother, and that Jesus is our mother. And he says that "Sophia has awakened in their childlike hearts."

Sister Lentfoehr, who was a close friend of Thomas Merton and a fellow poet and a critic of his own poetry in the good sense, says that

...the theological substrata of the prose poem [of Hagia Sophia] is rooted in an ancient intuition of reality, which goes back to the oldest Oriental thought: the masculine-feminine relationship basic to all being, since all being mirrors God.

All beings carry this dialectic, this tension between the masculine and the feminine. And of course, we know that that dialectic is completely out of whack at this time in history where patriarchy and its many, many excesses is dominating, has been nominated for centuries.

This is what the women's movement is about. This is what Sophia, the return of Sophia is about. This is about bringing Wisdom into education, and not plodding along as if knowledge is enough for human beings to live by.

That's a patriarchal heresy, an absurd statement, but it is exactly what academia today is constructed on: academia, and education. Education for youth, and education for adults, and for professionals, is profoundly out of whack. It is lacking Sophia; it is lacking even a quest for wisdom and Sophia.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.