

Daily Meditation 4/04/2023

Ending the Doctrine of Discovery, continued

Good morning.

In today's meditation, I talk about what I call the doctrine of discovery and papal fallibility.

Now you don't often see those two words together--papal fallibility. Because there's been such an explosion of interest in papal *infallibility* coming from the British Vatican Council in the 19th century, it's kind of sucked all the air out of the room. But, I daresay if you looked at history and read a lot of papal pronouncements and denunciations over the centuries, you'd find a lot more examples of papal infallibility. No, papal fallibility, not infallibility. It might take volumes, encyclopedia-style to list all the mistakes.

So, there are some today saying, 'Well, we shouldn't be celebrating Francis's rejection of the Doctrine of Discovery because he made other mistakes such as canonizing Junipero Serra, and so forth.' And it's true that that was a horrible mistake. But in this world of imperfection, we take what we can get sometimes. And the truth is, that is a major step. Pope Francis to have turned his back on 500/600 years of public teaching--teaching that is not just embedded in the Catholic Church but was taken up by the Supreme Court in the early 19th century and has penetrated law jurisprudence in America and in United Kingdom too.

So it is a major step that Pope Francis has stood up and rejected the Doctrine of Discovery in a very explicit way. And I do think we should respect that.

And he's done some other wonderful things too, like his encyclical on Laudato Si. And the common good of preserving Mother Earth is an absolutely major statement on ecology and climate change and how dangerous unbridled capitalism can be, which is why he's made so many enemies in the world of right-wing politics and economics and Wall Street.

So, again, we have to recognize that popes are fallible most of the time. And sometimes they can do very positive things. And sometimes some negative things happen. But I do think we should listen to this good news.

And I make the reference to the Magna Carta, sitting under glass in the British Museum, and immediately adjacent to it is something I'd never heard about when I first saw this, and I was in my late 20s and I saw the papal condemnation of the Magna Carta.

I didn't know the Magna Carta had been condemned by the pope. No one told me that in my years of Catholic education, training as a Dominican priest.

So maybe the old discovery, Doctrine of Discovery will be under glass in the museum and next year can be the statement by Pope Francis condemning it.

So I don't think we ever had a papal condemnation of the condemnation of the Magna Carta. So, life is not a straight line, folks. And there is a lot more to go, as I point out, in terms of underscoring the fallibility of popes in our time, including the canonization of Serra, but also the canonization of Opus Dei, fascist founder Josemaria Escriva.

So all this is a lesson in keeping one's own conscience and integrity and common sense and willingness to do research and the search for truth.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.