

Daily Meditation 05-12-23

When Joy Affects History and Cosmology Initiates Joy

Good morning.

We are meditating today on the topic of joy, when Joy affects history, and cosmology initiates joy. I must confess that I'm very pleased with this theme, today's meditation, maybe because it brings up two of my deepest passions. One is, of course, how history gets changed, changed for the better.

And we're living in a time of considerable darkness, pathology, much of it occurring on our TV screens every night as we listen to politicians who have sold their soul for whatever purpose. And truly the experience of evil is... well, just as Carl Jung said, it would be in the Age of Aquarius, it's above the table, it's on the table, it's no longer hiding.

Many, many people, putting politicians and those who aspire to be leaders, have no shame. And so they're not hiding evil anymore. They're just putting it out there, passing laws that will kill women in the name of saving life, passing laws that conjure up hatred, of people who are different, whether they be trans people, or people of other ethnicities and languages than our own. And of course, the evil wars raging can become even worse with the new weapons being manufactured and distributed and all the rest.

So I am interested in how history changes and how we change it.

And I'm so struck by Père Chenu's quote, in today's meditation. Père Chenu was a great historian, and I had the privilege of studying with him in the last year, and last semester that he taught, because he retired from teaching after that.

And one of his major works was a real iconic work published in English, by the University of Chicago. It's called *Nature, Man, and Society in the 12th Century*. He always maintained the 12th century was the greatest renaissance of the West, greater than the 16th, because the 16th century Renaissance was top-down, whereas the 12th-century Renaissance was bottom-up, where serfs, the young and women were its leaders.

And notice that he says, "Thanks to the spread of culture and thanks even more to the sensational apostolic awakening" -- that apostolic awakening he also calls an evangelical awakening, awakening to the real values of the gospel -- Christian people "became collectively aware of their environment, and sought to understand it."

But at the heart of this, the very first chapter in the book is about the rediscovery of nature, a new cosmology, a new appreciation for nature and for science that would give us the facts of nature, not just allegories and stories and legends about creation, but realities.

But notice what he says: "The joy of St. Francis had more influence than King John's oath of fealty to the Pope, not only upon the prosperity of the church,

but also upon human progress in the knowledge of Christ."

So he actually counts historical change by way of joy. Joy, this gift of the Spirit, this fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of our labor. And Chenu is not a Franciscan. He's a Dominican, but he respects as an historian, as a Christian, as a believer, he respects very much the contribution of Saint Francis. And notice how he names it as joy, bringing joy into the world, bringing joy into history, and it has profound consequences.

It awakens people, especially the ordinary people, those who are not running around trying to get themselves in high places of power and doing everything possible to do so, no matter what the ethics or morality or shame is involved in that. No. He's telling you about the spiritual gift of joy that changes history. Is that possible today?

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.