

Daily Meditation 05-24-23

Moving Beyond Fear

Good morning.

We continue our meditations on holiness. And it's in that context that we spent time on the topic of joy, the fruit of the Spirit, which I think is a sign of holiness, even in the midst of struggle.

And now we're talking about courage. And therefore we're talking about fear. And courage, I think is definitely one of the signs of spirit and holiness in our time. We've laid out a number of examples, from Dr. King to Fred Shuttlesworth, to Dorothy Stang, to the playwright Eugene O'Neill.

And today, let me quote from one of my very favorite books and one of my favorite authors. This is Père M. D. Chenu, French Dominican, his book in English, called *Nature, Man, and Society in the 12th Century*... *Nature, Man, and Society in the 12th Century*. And appropriately he has a picture by Hildegard of Bingen on the cover. She was 12th Century and Chenu was very high on Hildegard. And this is Chenu actually, a picture of him. And kind of at the age that I knew him first, in the 70s. He was 76 when I heard him in class, and it was the last class that he taught; he retired from professorship after that.

But the short paragraph I want to share with you is appropos for our topic. He says:

The economy of salvation is not defined exclusively, in the reflective and cautiously reasoned understanding of a few licensed thinkers.

That actually is a dig at professors in academia. So we're going to read it again. His sentences are often like this; they have a lot packed in. And this is only half the sentence. And digs can come from anywhere.

The economy of salvation is not defined exclusively in the reflective and cautiously reasoned understanding of a few licensed thinkers...

He's talking about professors as licensed thinkers; who are the rest of us?

...but also, the concrete decisions in the states of life embraced in the ideals of sanctity, and the evangelical work of bringing good news to the people.

But notice the ideal of sanctity. So he's saying that, that history is not to be studied just in terms of licensed thinkers and big shots. He's very much against the idea that history is made by big shots. He didn't write one autobiography in his life. You know, he admires people who are leaders and make important decisions...for good or for evil, I mean, he recognizes them. But again, his main thrust, he calls himself a "sociologist of grace," that

he's looking at the horizontal picture of where things happen in the world, where continuous creation, continuous incarnation, is going on.

And is this just one phrase in the ideals of sanctity that I'm turning to here. Because that's what we're talking about. The meaning of holiness or sanctity evolves with time, with culture. And not that the ideals they had 1000 years ago are to be tossed out the window entirely, but we live in a new culture, a new world, which demands new things of people, including, well, courage and joy such as we're talking about, we'll be dealing with some more mentions as well.

I just wanted to share this with you: this great historian, especially of the 12th century, Père Chenu, that was his specialty. And that was a great Renaissance, as he says, and notice the first word in the title of the book is *Nature: Nature, Man, and Society*, because there was this rediscovery of nature in the 12th century, of cosmology, of science, such as it was in that day, science coming from Aristotle, that awakened the whole generation and resulted in whole new institutions, whole new ways of doing education. The invention of the university occurred at the end of that century, and so much more. And of course, the art, the sculpture, the cathedrals, the architecture, that was breakthrough, and Gothic architecture, of the 12th and 13th century.

But again, this undergirding issue that he raises, that sanctity itself evolves, our understanding of it, and the requirements for it.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.