

Daily Meditation 07-13-23

Justice & Compassion as Visions of God that Melt Hearts

Good morning.

In yesterday's and today's meditation, we're listening to Thomas Aquinas talk about justice-making related to compassion. And one of the points that he stresses is that those who work for justice, he says, "should take pleasure in doing just deeds." And this will in turn, roll over into the doing of justice, when we'll grow to love justice and love doing justice. It becomes a habit; therefore, a virtue.

But why is he so certain that it will be a pleasure, that people will like doing it? Quote:

Everyone finds pleasure in what they are fond of. Lovers desire the object that is absent, and they take pleasure in it when it is present. In this way, a lover of horses finds a pleasure in a horse, and a lover of shows in a show and a lover of a friend in a friend.

So he's putting the work of justice in the context of joy and pleasure and delight. Notice: he's not setting it up in the context of duty, or must or should, but he's saying that the happiness of a person comes forward when one is doing what one enjoys doing, and especially when it is distributing joy. That is to say, it's working for others and gives them joy.

The work of justice pleases those who are suffering from injustice. It lightens their load, gives them hope, and gives them something to pace their own pleasure in life. Working with others, who are coworkers in justice is itself a pleasure. It is a good habit and a virtue.

And he cites the book of Proverbs, which says, "It is more pleasing to God to show compassion and justice than to offer sacrifices."

So the tradition that Jesus spoke to about justice and compassion is found in his lineage, such as the book of Proverbs: compassion and justice are more valuable than the sacrifices.

And then in the book of Hosea, prophet Hosea, chapter 6: "I desire compassion and not sacrifice" -- the same message.

And then the promise that "the Holy Spirit dissolves the hardness of hearts." That's Aquinas' words: "dissolves the hardness of hearts."

And that's why Luke 12 says "I have come to send fire on the earth."

The first effect of love is melting. What does that mean? It's an amazing statement: The first effect of love is melting. Melting divisions, melting hardness of heart, melting sadness, melting cynicism, melting despair: a lot of melting is going on when love flourishes.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.