

Daily Meditation 04-15-24

Is the World Love, as Teilhard Teaches?

Good morning.

In today's daily meditation, we're asking a question, very profound I think, from Teilhard de Chardin's observations about the universe and evolution--where he says, "we should not just talk about how God is love, but how the world is love."

And I want to share with you some responses I hold, to that question, on how we can all get there. I think it's important that we all create a litany, if you will, a list of answers to that question, "in what way is the world love?" And again, I make the distinction in my meditation between the world, creation, the universe, the cosmos being love, and what humans make of the world. That's the whole point, isn't it? We humans do a better job of fitting in the dynamics of the universe.

And speaking of the universe, I want to share with you this painting from MC Richards, potter and poet-philosopher, who wrote the classic book "Centering." She took up painting at the age of 70. She was on our faculty for years. And of course, cosmology was an integral part of her Creation Spirituality programs, which it should be, of all spirituality everywhere. And this sacred painting, she calls "Birthing A New Cosmos." I see here three seeds, in different stages of being.

So seeds are examples of expressions for love of the cosmos. The seed, and the soil that the seed falls into, and is watered, and knows how to break open. So that new shoots and new life are born. And of course, calls not just on the depths of the soil, and water for its nourishment, but of course, the Sun as well. So, it reaches out to Father sky, even as it's grounded in Mother Earth.

And even that word "ground" is a very important gift, and therefore an act of love on the part of the universe and the Earth. Meister Eckhart certainly picked up on that, when he said that "God's ground and my ground are the same." And that God is the Ground of Being.

Hildegard of Bingen said 100 years before Eckhart, that Mary is the Ground of Being, the divine feminine, the goddess, is the Ground of Being. All these are gifts, and therefore examples of the love that the cosmos is, that nature is, creation is.

I'll share with you some other teachings from the mystics. There is a teaching of the French artist Beaudelaire.. He says "we walk through forests (plural) of physical things, that are also spiritual things, that look on us with affectionate looks." So he is naming this reality, that the creation is blessing us on a regular basis, and loving us, looking at us with affection looks. Are we responding in kind?

Gerard Manley Hopkins, Jesuit and poet of the 19th century: *Glory be to God for dappled things, for skies of couple-colored as a brindled cow; for rose moles all in stipple upon trout that swim.* You can go and look up Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetry, and you'll find it flooded with this kind of appreciation of the beauty and the love that are pouring our way. From the fishes, from the cows, and all dappled things.

Sigmund Mowinckel, a biblical scholar of the Hebrew Bible, says this: *Blessing included that which we call material as well as the spiritual. First and foremost* — I mean his blessing in the Hebrew Bible -- *first and foremost, blessing is life, health, and fertility for the people, their cattle, their fields. Blessing is a basic power of life itself.* So that is a biblical scholar's talking about the goodness that is pouring our way. And goodness and love of course go together, don't they? And gifts and love go together. Gifts are pouring our way daily.

John Muir writes, *Should one faint by the way, who gains the blessings of one mountain day, wherever his or her fate, long life, short life, stormy or calm -- he or she is rich forever.* So he's proposing just one day in the mountains can make you rich forever.

Pablo Casals, the great musician: *Beauty is all about us. But how many are blind to it? People take little pleasure in the natural and quiet and simple things of life.* That is his call for awakening to the beauty that is a gift, coming our way daily, and therefore it is an expression of love coming our way daily.

And Julian of Norwich: *I know well, that heaven and earth, and all creation are great, generous, and beautiful, and good. God's goodness fills all the divine creatures, and all the blessed works*

full, and endlessly overflows in them. God is everything which is good, as I see it. And that goodness, which everything has, is God.

Mechthild of Magdeburg: *The manifold delight I learned to take in earthly things, can never drive me from my love for the nobility of creatures in their beauty, and in their usefulness. I will love God and not myself.* So another example of the gifts that are pouring our way.

Now I propose that we sit down and make litanies of these things: What are the manifestations of love and goodness that are hitting you in creation? And coming from the whole universe, coming from evolution, coming from deep time, coming from the 13.8 billion years that have brought us here? Write out some of these gifts.

Now I did this, in some exercises I did in my book, "Sins of the Spirit, Blessings of the Flesh, Transforming Evil in Soul and Society." In the opening chapters, chapters 2, 3, and 4, I lay out a litany first of the blessings of the flesh of the universe. I go through some amazing scientific facts about how the universe is blessing us. And in the next chapter, chapter 2, I lay out a litany of gifts of the flesh of the Earth: again, scientific stories and facts of how we're being blessed daily, loved daily therefore. And thirdly, Chapter 4, on the gifts of the flesh of our bodies, how special our bodies are.

So these are examples: these litanies I put together, using today's science, of how it's important to recall, to remember. How can we say thanks, if we can't remember? All these gifts in which we are immersed, gifts of the universe with its details, gifts of Mother Earth and her details, and the gift of our special bodies, which go back to the origin of the universe. All this, I think, sustains Teilhard's insight that the world is love.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.