

Daily Meditation 12/23/2024
Is There One Advent---Or Several?

Good morning.

In today's meditation, we continue this reflection, on the relation between the via negativa and promise of a coming, the via creativa, therefore, and of course, the via positiva is lurking. We're waiting for a time of Advent, the light and the darkness, the darkness and the light.

And it's good to remember that one of the positive roles that suffering or emptying or kenosis brings about is that creativity itself can be a painful process. Ask mothers in the experience of childbirth. Ask artists in the experience of birthing new images and breakthroughs of consciousness or art forms and so forth.

The journey of letting go and subtraction and grief and loss is often a prelude toward breakthrough. So, sensitivity and the undergoing of pain, like a pruning process, can make one stronger, and it's necessary for the via transformativa that is coming.

Susan Griffin says beauty demands a more arduous process, and Simone Biles says that beauty and terror are related.

So, beauty is not about prettiness. Prettiness comes cheap. Prettiness does not demand arduousness, but beauty does. Beauty is hard. The Song of Songs in the Bible says that beauty is hard as hell, that love is hard.

All social movements and organizations were born of pain, whether you talk about unemployment shared or unjust taxes shared or the bitter taste and evil of racism or of sexism or of ageism. All this that gives birth to new forms and new possibilities and, therefore, hope, all this comes at a price.

And even the Christmas story is not at all exclusively about light. There's the suffering of parents, or parents not having an inn in which to give birth to their child.

So the manger, well, it carries many dimensions to it as an archetype, being among four-legged ones, for example. Nevertheless, the manger is a designation of poverty. And obviously, childbirth in a manger sounds like a harder task than childbirth in a heated inn.

And of course, another severe story and Christmas story is that of Herod wanting to kill the firstborn, all the young babies at that time, because he had heard from the Magi that a new king was coming into the world.

And of course, that's a very severe situation, and the Magi themselves got the message, having visited the Christ child in the manger, that they should not return the way they came because Herod would go after them.

So, this story, and all these stories gathered together, are stories about the dialectic and the conflict between good and evil, holy and evil. Or unholy or evil. So, it is a severe reminder that evil was always present, even in the midst of great joy and doxa, glory, triumph. Something new in all the other stories and the Christmas story of the promise of glory and joy.

So, the Christmas story and the Advent story come together with intimations of evil and intimations of wonder, joy and accomplishment, glory that can overcome evil. As Rabbi Hessel says in the biblical tradition, it's holiness. The holy overcomes evil.

So all these stories are gathered together: the season of Advent, moving into Christmas and Kwanzaa and Hanukkah, time of darkness, with the solstice moving into a time of light, both physically and cosmically speaking, but also orally, spiritually speaking, and the promises that creativity comes next.

The birth of a Christ child is a turn in the darkness of the world. And the Christ child, not only of 2000 years ago, but the Christ in all of us, that we could all undergo this process that Christmas is, and the promise that we ourselves become other Christs, that we carry the energy of the Divine, that energy of compassion, fullness, birthing, creativity, forgiveness.

That we ourselves carry that into the world at this time, so that Christmas is not just the birth of Jesus, but the birth of all of us as other Christs, other Buddhas, that are images of God.

Thank you. We'll see you next week. And a blessed Christmas to everybody.