

Daily Meditation 5-05-25

Holiness As Cosmic Hospitality

Good morning.

Well, I think, as you all know, the theme of this Daily Meditation in the beginning, that's six plus years ago, was to pray the news. Pray the news. And there's a lot of news these days, as we all know, much of it profoundly disturbing, and some of it not so.

So I'd like to begin today's meditation with you, by sharing with you a few minutes of my own recent news, personal news, you might say. Saturday morning, 3 am, I got back from a trip to upstate New York. We reburied my second oldest brother, Nathaniel, Nat, who went to college at West Point. That was his alma mater, and he asked to be buried there. And about 50 members of our family and extended family showed up. So it was a very rich gathering of various Fox clan.

And two individuals stood out for me, worthy to share with you. Both of them were the grandsons of my brother. So the younger generations, both in their 20s. One of them was an archeologist, or paleontologist. Has a PhD paleontology, living in South Dakota, where there are a lot of diggings that he's involved in, and teaching the younger generation about paleontology. But he mentioned just almost casually, that he and his department lost overnight a grant of \$250,000, and a second one of \$150,000, that was, of course, dedicated to the study and digging that paleontology requires.

So that really struck me: here in my own family, the cuts from DOGE and Musk and Trump are being felt. And he said these projects that have been cut overnight, were already in process. So everything they've already done is dead, and they will have to dismantle their crews and everything else, to absorb those cuts. So it just struck me that this is not just news going on in the newspaper. This is going to strike people personally, their families, etc., around the country, who have committed their lives to doing serious work on behalf of our communities, on behalf of our species.

But also, I'll say, I brought a handful of my Trump books with me, and all of them were picked up and disappeared at the pre-funeral party of my relatives. But a second young man, who was also a grandson of my brother, had a story to tell too. Because it came out that he is an engineer. He has spent time in several African communities, working under the aegis of the society called Engineers Without Borders.

And what was unique about that for me, is that the person who founded Engineers Without Borders, Dr. Bernard Amadei from the engineering department at the University of Colorado, he studied with me at the Institute of Culture, at the University of Creation Spirituality. And I remember the day he joined us as a student. He said, "I have been teaching engineering for 27 years, and I'm burned out by academia and by engineering, and I don't know what's next." But a few weeks into our program, he came to me and said, "I found my soul. I got my soul back," is how he put it. And he returned to Boulder, Colorado University, and he started Engineers Without Borders, which now has over 18,000 active members.

So it showed me, really, what a small world this is, that I have a grandson, or I'm a great uncle, of a young engineer who joined Bernard's organization Engineers Without Borders, and obviously profited from it. He was very excited about his work in Africa and so forth. So another lesson of how small the world is,

Of course, another big issue in the news these days is the Conclave, the upcoming voting on a new Pope. And around that, there have been some pretty odd things happening. I saw one article about the gambling going on about who's going to be made Pope, especially among the younger generation online. It's very similar to the game about who's going to win this football game or that. And it's kind of amusing, and kind of brings you up to date, or maybe it brings the papacy up to date, I'm not sure, but that's one angle on the Conclave. Another is, of course, the popularity of the film, which was up for an Academy Award this year, and I did choose to watch it on the airplane going to New York this past week, just so I would know what they're talking about. It was entertaining, I would say, with perhaps a lesson or two involved.

But one dimension to the Conclave is this headline: "Catholic outrage grows over Pope Trump image on official White House media." So that's the headline of the National Catholic Reporter. Some of you may have seen this. I'm not going to reproduce it, but you can dig it up yourself if it interests you. But there was a picture, an AI-generated picture, on White House stationery. So this was not some kooks from outside the administration, but kooks from very much within the administration, where they have a picture of guess who: Donald Trump in a papal outfit, wearing white this time, and a cross and the rest — in other words, being the new Pope. And that he actually said it'd be nice so there'd be a Pope Trump. And there would be a debate for decades about whether he was being serious or facetious. But nevertheless, his organization within the White House put out this document.

And in a fury, he got a lot of Catholics. And here is just a few observations about it, about the firestorm of criticism from the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church. Here's how the Bishop of Springfield, Illinois said,

This is deeply offensive to Catholics, especially during the sacred time that we are still mourning the death of Pope Francis, and praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the election of our new Pope. God is not mocked. By publishing a picture of himself masquerading as the Pope, President Trump mocks God, the Catholic Church, and the Papacy.

And the New York State Catholic Conference wrote, *There is nothing clever or funny about this image, Mr. President. We just buried our beloved Pope Francis; cardinals are brought in to solemn conclave to elect a successor to St Peter. Do not mock us.* And however, there is no comment from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, who've been very, very much, shall we say, busy genuflecting to the new administration. It kind of reveals, as if we needed more that, the lack of courage and conscience, morality, on the part of the dominant forces within the Episcopal Conference in the United States. Only a few bishops addressed the image directly, according to this article. But some other people did comment.

Here's how Cardinal Robert McElroy, the new Cardinal of Washington, DC put it — appointed by Pope Francis: *This affirms how unserious and incapable the President is. At 78, he remains a 10-year-old*

child. Emotionally scarred and broken, while desperate to prove he could be somebody. His problem is, he can't grow up to prove it.

Actually, that was not Cardinal McElroy. That was Michael Steele, former head of the Republican National Committee, who is a Catholic, and appears as a television commentator. That was him talking, that was not the cardinal talking.

But this has been a story that's reached Rome itself. And the Italian news are picking up on it, and complaining, it seems quite appropriately, about the American scene.

One of the candidates for the papacy, you might say, is a Filipino Cardinal who comes across as a person very much like Pope Francis, very pastoral and not into dogmatic declarations and so forth. And they found that the right wing in America is carrying on a battle against him, so he will not be made Pope. And they released on social media a video of his singing karaoke. Now, karaoke is very popular in Philippines. But in this karaoke video, he's singing John Lennon's song, *Imagine*. Well, the right wing comes out and says, "This is full of heresies!" Such as it says, "imagine no religion," etc. Well, it just happens that the version that the cardinal sang of *Imagine*, leaves out a few lines, including that someone edited it. Maybe he did. But the point is, there's this ruckus going on where the far-right wing Catholics are trying to prove that this fellow is heretical through singing karaoke.

So one needs to keep one sense of humor through the news cycle. And I think were receiving a lot of it these days, a sense of humor and a conscience and critical thinking. The combination is what gets us through our trying times like these.

Thank you. We'll see you next week, and who knows, we may have a new Pope.