

Daily Meditation, 10/17/21

Deep Ecumenism, World Parliament, Cusa, and Joanna Macy

Good morning.

This morning we're meditating on deep ecumenism and I bring in the subject of the World Parliament because the World Parliament is celebrating this weekend. And it's a marvelous format for bringing together the wisdom and diversity of the world's religions. In fact, later this morning, we were celebrating a cosmic mass at the World Parliament and tomorrow morning, Monday, we'll be offering a workshop or a panel on the Order of the Sacred Earth. So, I and my organizations are involved in the World Parliament again this season.

But I invoke Joanna Macy, the wonderful Buddhist teacher. And it's been my privilege to work with her over the years. And it was from her, really, that I came up with the term "deep ecumenism." Because she was talking, back when we first met in the '80s, about deep ecology; and how deep ecology was not just about arguments about how to save the Earth--the science and the technology and so forth behind it; but the term "deep ecology" was added in order to emphasize the spiritual dimension, the transformative dimension of our consciousness, our souls, that needs to be addressed if we're going to save the planet as we know it.

And I thought that was a wonderful phraseology, not just ecology, but deep ecology. And so I applied it to religions, too, with the term "deep ecumenism." Because I had observed, for decades, ecumenism happening, more or less; the religions beginning to get together, after the Second Vatican Council, especially.

But so much of it, I thought, was in the heads. It was about theological position papers. 'We believe this, now I'll hear what you believe and what this other person believes,' and so forth. That's better than nothing, and better than warring with one another, but for me it didn't go nearly deep enough. For me, we have to get together--the world religions--at the level of spirituality, not just at the level of position papers.

And that's why I felt that that word "deep," as in "deep ecology," really was necessary for deep ecumenism and to bring in the spiritual dimension. And to have us celebrate together and grieve together and, of course, to work for social justice and eco-justice together.

And so that's where the phrase "deep ecumenism" came from. It's more or less adapted from Joanna Macy's work in deep ecology.

And I'm moved that Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, who is certainly one of the pioneers in deep ecumenism, told me that he was looking for a term for what he was doing with his life; and with his interacting with monks like Thomas Merton, and Sufis, and Buddhist meditation, and so many activities he was involved in as a Jew, interacting at a deep and spiritual level with others

of other traditions. And he really liked the term "deep ecumenism" and adapted it in his own way.

Here's one beautiful teaching from a Sufi master. He says, "Sufism is not different from the mysticism of all religions."

You see, the mysticism of all religions, that's what I'm trying to bring forward, beginning with my own, as a Christian, as a westerner. Because our mystical tradition has been utterly ignored for centuries. The modern age was anti-mystical. And check out any seminary and you'll know what I'm talking about.

"Mysticism," says the Sufi master, "comes from Adam, God's peace upon him. It has assumed different shapes and forms over many centuries. For example, the mysticism of Jesus, God's peace upon him, of monks or hermits, and of Muhammad, God's peace and blessing upon him. A river passes through many countries and each claims it for its own, but there is only one river."

"There's only one river." That sentence really resonates with the words of Nicholas of Cusa, that we meditated on earlier this past week, and with my own phraseology in my book, *One River, Many Wells*. That there are many wells into this one underground river that Meister Eckhart talks about--a Buddhist well, a Sufi well, a Christian well, a Jewish well, a Hindu well, a Goddess well.

And so we all go down wells, but we hopefully get to the depths, and that is the one underground river that Nicholas of Cusa celebrates as wisdom, "a supreme and terrible beauty named wisdom."

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.