

**Daily Meditation 10/23/2021**  
**Aquinas on Nature as Carrier of Wisdom and Truth**

Good morning.

In today's meditation we continue our following of Thomas Aquinas on his deep ecumenism. And we especially lay out his love of nature and his invitation to meditate on nature: that nature itself is revelatory of the Divine; it speaks the Divine. It too is Logos, a Word of God.

He says to meditate on creation is to view and marvel at divine wisdom. And so wisdom is revealed to us by creatures.

He actually says, "Consider the birds of the sky, since there is wisdom from them."

And he invokes Job (that first sense he attributes to Jesus, really) and in Job, he says -- Job says, chapter 12 -- "Ask the cattle and they will teach you"... ask the cattle and they will teach you.

So are cattle and birds teachers of us, as they were for Jesus and Job? And he cites in another place, how the Psalmist says, "Look up to the mountains"...look up to the mountains, and the exhilaration of seeing the beauty of mountains, and the greatness of the mountain, is part of wisdom, is part of contemplation.

But he also turns to science, and of course he spent his entire adult life bringing Aristotle the greatest scientist of the era, into the world of faith. And Aristotle had three strikes against him: first, he was a pagan. Secondly, he was a scientist, and many many Christians in Aquinas' day, like in today's day, were divorced from science; they saw no reason for science. They said the Bible has all the answers and all the questions. But of course Aquinas said no; he said revelation comes in two volumes: the Bible and nature, so we have to study nature.

The third strike against Aristotle was that he came to Europe through Islam. It was in Baghdad itself where there were teams and teams of Muslim translators translating Aristotle from the Greek into Latin. All this going on in the 12th and early 13th century when Aquinas was alive. And then Aristotle came in to Europe by way of Spain from Islam.

But notice what he says at the end of today's meditation:

"There can be no question that to study creatures is to build up one's Christian faith. And the opinion is false of those who assert that it makes no difference to the truth of the faith what anyone holds about creatures, so long as one thinks rightly about God. For error about creatures spills over into false opinion about God and takes people's minds away from God, to whom faith seeks to lead them."

So we need to go to those who know creatures and know nature, and we call these people scientists, people who study nature. And he says a mistake about nature is also a mistake about God, so an insight about nature that science can give us will result in an insight about divinity and how divinity works in the world.

So this is tremendous affirmation of the scientist's vocation and this is part of deep ecumenism, I think. Reaching out not only to people of other faith traditions, but to scientists who may have new insight about nature itself, and be thinking differently than people from previous generations and epochs.

And certainly Aquinas fought for this reality of interacting with science his entire life because he wrote commentaries on almost every one of Aristotle's books. That's how involved he was in the science of his day.

Aristotle in his day would have been like Einstein in the mid 20th century -- he was that new and fresh and profound.

And Aquinas jumped right in to learn everything he could about nature through the work of science.

So today, with so much new science at our fingertips, it's our responsibility to learn more about nature by studying what scientists are telling us. And in that context we will learn more about the Divine as well, according to Aquinas's theory and practice.

Thank you; we'll see you tomorrow.