

**Daily Meditation 07/20/2022**

## **Sparks, Souls, and Luminaries Receiving the Medal of Freedom**

Good morning.

It is our delight this morning to meditate together on the Presidential Medal of Freedom awards that were given out this week by President Biden and I.

I speak to a few of the individuals who were so chosen, but I also offer a footnote. We can get the entire list and the list is very impressive and very diverse--from young people to old people, women and men, and people of many ethnicities and traditions and professions.

So it's a wonderful celebration of virtues, but it is a celebration of virtue. And I love very much the quotation that I have from Thomas Aquinas. It constitutes one of the chapter titles in my book on the *Tao of Thomas Aquinas: Fierce Wisdom for Fierce Times*.

Chapter 18: "It is a great thing to do miracles, but it is a greater thing to live virtuously."

I just love that. It's saying living virtuously isn't easy, and we don't always get it right, and all of us stumble and fall and have to get up and start over and improve ourselves and all the rest. But I just love it that so many superficial religious types want to throw everything into a miracle, but Aquinas is saying, you know, 'Cool it. A bigger miracle than miracles is just go ahead and live your life virtuously.'

And, of course, in that word, virtue is the word man. "Vir" is a Latin word, "vir," for man.

And so what's virtuous also, as Hildegard of Bingen teaches, is authentic masculinity. It is virility. It is manliness.

And of course, we're seeing a lot of "unmanliness" in our culture these days, and the opposite of virility, faux masculinity--all part of patriarchy's squelching of authentic virtue in favor of profits, and power over, and the reptilian brain triumphing.

So, I point out in this short essay in the Aquinas book, around the statement by Aquinas that, of course, he draws (Aquinas does) from Aristotle, who, of course, is a pagan and not a Christian, and a scientist and not a priest. He draws on him for his ethics.

He wrote a whole commentary, a whole book on Aristotle's ethics and wrote another book on Aristotle's politics. And as he says, the politics derived from the ethics. Would that were always the case, especially in our culture at this time.

But again, Aquinas deliberately chose not to deal with ethics in terms of rules and do's and don'ts, but in terms of virtues. And this is how he defines virtue: "Human virtue is a participation in divine power."

Now, notice that virtue is a kind of power, but it's an inner power. It's not the power of outside resources, dark money, or selling your soul to get ahead. It is something internal. Virtue is a habit, a good habit, that we develop.

"Human virtue is a participation in divine power."

And he loves to talk about prudence and about wisdom, about justice and love, courage and fortitude, and especially magnanimity, which he writes a lot about.

And "magnanimity" means a big soul, and it is part of fortitude; it's part of courage. And we've had some good examples lately--not only these recipients of this award, but I'm thinking of the young woman who testified last week at the January 6th hearings.

She was just so far ahead of all the men who are hiding and refusing to come out of the closet to take an oath, to tell the truth of what they've seen, and who saw awful things for a couple of years and did not tell us, the public, about any of it.

And then, of course, I think about how the late President honored the same Presidential Medal of Freedom, gave it to Rush Limbaugh. And for me, Rush Limbaugh is the father of hate radio and hate television. And it's not virtuous to spread hate by radio, by television, by social media, or any other way.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.