

Daily Meditation 09/01/2022

Opus Dei and American Fascism Strike It Rich

Good morning.

Today we are, unfortunately, having to talk again about Opus Dei and American fascism.

But things are such that even the President of the United States is using this F word. This past week, in his public speeches, he talks about a "semi-fascism."

My term would be simply to call it American fascism. There's a version going on in Brazil, and so forth. It's our version of fascism, as there's a version going on in Hungary, and certainly in Italy today. And it is about not governing and building politics through consensus or even through laws, but through power for power's sake.

And we see a lot of this emerging--no longer on the peripheral, but in the center of politics in America today. And I think President Biden is appropriate and right to call it out.

When I think of fascism, I always think of what Susan Sontag, the cultural critic and historian wrote about it. She defined it as "institutional violence."

Institutional violence.

Now, I underwent a lot of institutional violence in the Catholic Church under the previous two Popes--Pope John Paul II, and Pope Benedict XVI, who reigned 34 years between them.

This institutional violence includes the silencing of theologians. I was just one of 106, I think, that I have counted and named in my book, *The Pope's War*, who were silenced or abused, driven out of their order or their priesthood, for doing their job, which is to think. Theologians are hired to think.

And I'll never forget, many years ago, when I was still a Dominican, and I was doing a public dialogue with Brian Swimme, the cosmologist of science and spirituality. And that was back when I was teaching in Mundelein College in Chicago. And afterwards, a woman came up and she was a theologian at the Institut Catholique in Paris, my alma mater, where I attended my doctoral studies.

And she said to me, "This is such an exciting night. I just loved it." She said, "But this could never be happening in Europe." She said, "The Pope..." (and at that time it was John Paul II) "has killed theology in Europe."

And of course, his right hand man, his hatchet man at the Congregation Doctrine of Faith, was Cardinal Ratzinger who later became Pope Benedict XVI and who later put pressure on the Dominicans to expel me.

So that was institutional violence, because it's not just about an individual--or 106 individuals, from around the world, I might say--being expelled from their vocations, to teach and to study and to write and lecture about theology in our time, bringing theology up to our time. It's not just that, it is how many people were deprived of thoughts and thinking about religion, bringing it into the 20th and 21st century. That's what makes it violent, that you're interfering with the desire to learn and to know.

As Thomas Aquinas (who's sitting off my shoulder there) says, "Proper objects of the heart are truth and justice. And when you banish truth, you better believe you're getting close to vanishing justice, too."

And that is happening in America today.

This phrase invented by one of President Trump's close workers: "alternative facts," they're running loose today! "Truth and justice go together," as Aquinas says. And you banish one, you banish the other.

And so, part of preparing the way for a system of injustice is to banish thinking. And now we have publicly a new burning of books movement in America, which is people taking books down from bookshelves in high schools and so forth, dictating to teachers what they can and cannot teach.

We have government officials, we have governors, like the governor of Florida. Governors and legislators in Texas, too, banishing books by thoughtful people--many of them people of color, of course, who they do not want their views about things.

And so this combination of violence, violence to the mind, the violence to truth, will culminate in violence to justice. And it did culminate on January 6, where we had a full day of violent horrors.

We've all seen these movies over and over and we know the victims, we know of the victims. A number were killed. Many of the policemen, over 140 of them, were wounded--not just physically, but psychologically for the rest of their life.

So this is not just talk. The fascists do not just talk, they act out of their convictions. We need to become more and more aware.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.