

Daily Meditation 10/4/2022

Spiritual Lessons Animals Teach Us

Good morning., and happy feast day of St. Francis.

Today we continue our meditations on and with animals. This, in order to fill our souls with a bit of the *via positiva* in the midst of so much *via negativa*, if you will: bad news about climate change coming to a crescendo with the recent hurricane in Florida, and the ongoing war in Ukraine. And of course, the denial of climate change happening at the same time that the world is clearly warming up, seas are rising, ice is melting, water is getting scarce on the one hand, and on the other hurricanes, floods, and all the rest are increasing.

So just dip into some of the beauty of Mother Earth, who is under so much peril at this time.

We are meditating on the animals and especially on today's feast day. Max Scheler, who I cite in today's meditation, about how the animals have a truthful language, wagging of tail and twittering of birds: a "universal grammar," he says, pantomime, to communicate with other species as well as their own.

But he goes on and says this:

In humans generally, the instinct for specialized identification has atrophied more than in most animals, and has applied itself, moreover, to very general patterns in the life of others. And in the exercise of the maternal instinct, there remains much greater residual capacities for identification than in the average adult product of modern civilization.

So he's saying that the animal world has stayed true to its maternal instinct more fully; it hasn't been completely absorbed and taken over, I would put it, by patriarchy. And that has something to do with the resilience of the animal species.

Now, Meister Eckhart has a very interesting observation about animals; in particular dogs. First, as we saw in a teaching of his a couple days ago, he talks about the "equality of being" that we share with other animals,...the equality of being... and we should spend more time meditating on the equality rather than on our own superiority. And he tells us this, he says:

If there were a poor blind man with great affection for the dog's master, the dog would love him more than a king or an emperor who disliked his master.

So think about that, that the animal world is not impressed by privilege, by titles, by kings or emperors... that a dog would prefer to hang out with the friends of the dog's owner than with a king or an emperor who did not like his master. He would be very uncomfortable hanging out with the the pooh-bahs of society, rather than just a friend, even a poor blind friend of his master.

So friendship too, is a real gift we find in animals, certainly in dogs, and many others.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow