

Daily Meditation 12/28/2022

Meister Eckhart on Our Becoming Mothers of God

Good morning.

Today we continue our meditations on the Christmas season and Advent and Christmas. And the question posed today has to do with our becoming mothers of God. Meister Eckhart calls for this sense of mothering, and the meditation ends with his powerful teaching about creativity and about where creativity comes from. And, of course, for him, it comes from the Holy Spirit, just as the pregnancy of Mary came from the Holy Spirit. And so this is what he says:

The work that is 'with,' 'outside,' and 'above' the artist -- (he is putting those things in quotation marks)...must become the work that is 'in' him or her, taking form within them -- in other words, to the end that he or she may produce a work of art, in accordance with the verse, 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee...'

...which is, of course, the angel speaking to Mary in Luke's gospel, chapter one, verse 35. So what he's saying is this: he's applying the Mary annunciation experience, Mary's conception, if you will, of the Christ child. He's drawing a direct parallel between that and us when we are being creative.

Now, Eckhart, like most pre-modern people, whether indigenous people or medieval thinkers, felt we were all artists in the biblical tradition and the Christian tradition. We're all artists, because we're all made in the image and likeness of God.

The whole idea that art is something elitist, about geniuses, with paintings that sell for millions of dollars -- that's a very modern concept. It's not indigenous. And it's not the way Eckhart and others thought, in his time.

We're all artists, because we all have the power of creativity. Now, it doesn't mean we're all painting or writing plays or making movies or acting in theatre, though some are, but look more deeply at the meaning of arts and creativity: that we are all birthing our lifestyles. We make choices about work, and we birth at our work. We birth in preparation for work, that is in our education or apprenticing with others.

And that's the point: that art is everywhere. David Paladin, the wonderful Navajo painter, used to say he's sick and tired of white people saying they're not artists: that if you can talk, he says, you're an artist, because talking is giving to others, your thoughts, your experiences, your concerns, and so forth. It's an art form. Some people talk more poetically than others.

And those who value talking, in what can be called an art form, are very often indigenous people and people who live less by reading than by speaking, and speaking less frequently. In other words, speaking out of a sense of silence. That is something that we've learned, of course, Meister Eckhart also very much endorses: to "speak from the wealth of silence," he says, especially if you're talking about divine things.

So really, then, Eckhart is opening the door for all kinds of ways in which we humans give birth to the Christ, give birth to the best of ourselves, give birth to that which heals, and hopefully is happening at work. And also, of course, in our interactions with others and family and community, and citizens too.

So this is just one of the important teachings around Christmas, that once again, we don't want to focus just on Mary and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is available for all of us, to give birth to great things, to beautiful things, to healing energies that we have every right to call the Christ.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.