

**Daily Meditation 01/02/2023**  
**The Legacy of Pope Benedict XVI, Part 1**

Good morning.

This morning we are meditating on the legacy of Cardinal Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict the XVI. And I refer to a very solid article done by Jason Berry, and he draws out his own book with the topic of money in the Roman Catholic Church and of the pedophile crisis that, unfortunately, was not dealt with well by Cardinal Ratzinger.

But I also refer to some of my stories with him because I was involved in a struggle with him for over 12 years. I got to know him rather well; never met him in person however.

But one of the topics I refer to--so now talking about his record, his legacy on deep ecumenism which, of course, was a very great breakthrough in the Second Vatican Council, where the church apologized to the Jewish people and called on the wisdom of all the world traditions, religious traditions to get together, to work together.

Unfortunately, as I point out, Cardinal Ratzinger did not pursue the depth of this invitation. Deep ecumenism was not his forte.

But I refer to an individual whom I hired in my program, master's program at Holy Names College, whose name was Starhawk. I want to tell you a little more about that story.

When I got the invitation to move my program from Mundelein College in Chicago, after seven years there, to Holy Names College in Oakland, California, from the President and Board of Holy Names College, I was, of course, arranging a faculty, several of whom were coming with me from Chicago. And I talked to Rosemary Ruether about it, the Catholic feminist theologian, because she was on that faculty, both at Mundelein College and at Barat College before that. She taught courses when I was head of Religious Studies Department there.

So, we knew each other and I invited her to come up because her roots actually were in California. And she said she couldn't, that she was committed to her work there in Evanston with a Methodist seminary there. But she said, 'I just met this young female woman theologian at a conference this summer--very, very bright. Her name is Starhawk. I would highly recommend you hire her. And she lives out in the Bay area.'

So that is how I first learned of Starhawk. And I did hire her.

And she was a fine teacher. And she wrote a wonderful book--but she's written books since, as well--I loved a lot called *Dreaming the Dark*. And one, endorsement is from Merlin Stone, who has a fine reputation.

"*Dreaming the Dark* is a brilliant and exciting articulation of a spiritual vision that could lead us to a new and better world. With crystal clear perception, a language akin to poetry, Starhawk moves easily between the microcosms and macrocosms of reality, inviting us to join her in viewing the world, ourselves included, as sacred and beautiful."

Another endorsement comes from Margot Adler. "Fusing feminism, paganism and politics, Starhawk takes on the great challenge of our time... produces a book that will be a force for survival and renewal."

So Starhawk, whom of course I got to know as a friend and fellow faculty member, was a deeply committed person to social justice causes. She was raised Orthodox Jewish, but as a young woman discovered her femininity, that is to say her lineage as a woman. And she sought avenues to fill the gaps in her spiritual history. And Wicca was a particular path that she chose.

So again, I see in the antipathy towards Starhawk, and of course, the raising of the word "witch, witch, witch" as something entirely negative, to be kind of scary, really, because it both feeds misogyny--hatred of the women--but it also feeds the hatred of paganism or those who are close to the Earth. And it's part of the anti-nature bias of our patriarchal culture.

So I want to point that out because it's part of the story of me and Cardinal Ratzinger. Because, as I point out, he couldn't get it out of his mind. Every time he was writing about me, he would say, "And he has a witch on his faculty."

While I think that his closed-mindedness about the history of women and his ignorance, I guess, about the burning of witches by the Catholic Church overcame his capacity to enter into dialogue, deep ecumenism, which the Second Vatican Council had urged Catholics to do.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.