

Daily Meditation 02/28/2023

Mystics Speaking Truth to Power: Sister Dorothy Stang

Good morning.

Today we're bringing into our discussion on truth and power the story of Sister Dorothy Stang, who complements stories from Teresa of Avila about truth, and from Jesus. And, of course, all the mystics in their own way are speaking to this reality.

I'm sharing today and for the next two days (excuse me) the talk that I gave at the 18th anniversary of the martyrdom of Sister Dorothy Stang just two weeks ago or so, and several of us who knew her were invited to speak for about six minutes each.

It was a very moving experience. And the theme of my talk is the question of the sacred, and where do you find the sacred?

And, of course, Sister Dorothy found it in the forest, with the forest, where she lived over 40 years with peasants who worked the forest and the indigenous people trying to protect the forests.

I want to share with you a wonderful poem, part of it, by St. John of the Cross, over my shoulder here.

So I just finished our six-part class on John of the Cross and was able to apply the four paths of creation spirituality to his life story and his poetry, where he invests so much of his soul and spirit.

So his first poem, which he wrote essentially in prison, is called "The Spiritual Canticle," and it's based on the Song of Songs, a rewriting of the Song of Songs, because at the time, the church forbade Christians in Spain to read the Song of Songs. So he wrote his own version of it, got people to read it that way. It's pretty clever, pretty political, pretty creative.

So it begins with his lover being lost, his beloved. And of course, Beloved was John's favorite name for God. His poem begins - and I'm going to jump around a bit.

*Where have you hidden, Beloved, and left me moaning?
You've fled like the stag after wounding me.
I went out calling you, and you were gone.*

And so he talks about looking for his beloved in nature. He says,

*Seeking my love, I will head for the mountains and for watersides.
I will not gather flowers, or fear wild beasts.
I will go beyond strong men and frontiers.
O woods and thickets, planted by the hand of my Beloved--*

Yes, the beauty of nature, of course, and the presence of the divine in nature.

O green meadow, coated bright with flowers, tell me: has he passed by you?

*Pouring out a thousand graces, he passed these groves in haste,
and having looked at them with his image alone, clothed them in beauty.*

So that's a hint of what's to come, that John is finding divinity in creation, as certainly Sister Dorothy and her peasant co-workers found there also.

But John keeps going on and has adventures. And then he comes to this 13th stanza which is really a crescendo of finding the divine in nature:

*My beloved is the mountains and lonely wooded valleys,
strange islands, and resounding rivers, the whistling of love stirring
breezes, the tranquil night at the time of the rising dawn,
silent music, sounding solitude, the supper that refreshes and
deepens love.*

So those stanzas are just glorious and stunning for their panentheism, for the affirmation the divine can be found in nature, and we are not separated from the Divine if we stay tuned to the beauty and the miracle of nature, of creation around us, the Sacred speaking to us on a regular basis.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.