

Daily Meditation 05/01/2023
Joy and Holiness, continued

Good morning.

We're talking this morning, continuing our meditation on joy, and joy as one of the signs of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit and a sign of holiness, really.

And Aquinas in our meditation talks about how intrinsic joy is to the universe itself. The whole universe exists for the sake of joy, because of joy, because of the divine joy which pulls us forward.

I'd like to share with you some work from Aquinas. It's from my book *Sheer Joy: Conversations with Thomas Aquinas on Creation Spirituality*. And one of the surprises that came, because I translate many of Aquinas's teachings that were never translated before into English or German or French, or even Italian. And one of those was his commentary on the Psalms.

And here are some things he says about joy in the Psalms, and his commentary on Psalms. This is commentary on Psalm 50:

"One who has charity loves God and possesses God. And one who has that, if one loves, is happy. So where there is charity, there is joy. Where there is love, there is joy."

Romans 14 says, "The reign of God is not in food and drink, but in joy in the spirit."

This joy the psalmist had lost and so he seeks to have it restored to him when he says to "restore my happiness to me."

Then Aquinas goes on and says, "Spiritual joy has three levels. The first consists in the harmony of feeling. The second, in the expansion of the heart. The third, in the progress toward exterior things."

Harmony through joy is spoken of by the psalmist. Then he quotes from Psalm 50:

"When indeed the feeling rests in the beloved, then one's soul is expanded in order to experience greater expansion. And this even appears in sensible things."

This is very important, the expansion of the soul. Because what is courage? Courage is two Latin words for "large." A big heart is part of the question. How do we expand our hearts? It's very important.

And here Aquinas is making the point that he makes many places, that joy expands the heart. Think of that one. Fear constricts us; joy is expansive. We said yesterday how joy leads to celebration. And that's expansion.

Second Corinthians says, "Our heart has been expanded."

And so the psalmist speaks of joy that causes expansion. And joy flows back into the body.

Proverbs 17 says, "The mind full of joy makes the days of one's life to flower. The sad spirit dries up its bones."

So there are two dimensions to the mind. One is to flower and flourish. Expand.

That is the mind full of joy according to Proverbs 17.

And the other is sadness. "The sad spirit dries up its bones."

Again, a quote from Proverbs, invoked by Thomas Aquinas.

He says, "The heart of people is worn down by the sadness of penitence, and so when people are happy, it is a sign that the bones that have worn down and inflicted have a share of joy."

The prophet Jeremiah promises first the temporal pleasure of the people when he speaks of "the voice of joy."

This is from his commentary on Jeremiah.

And he cites Jeremiah, "From then I will banish the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of husband and the voice of wife, the sound of the mill and the life of the land."

Prophet Isaiah says, "Joy and gladness will be found in thanksgiving and the voice of praise."

So, this is just one example from Aquinas's work in Scripture.

Here he comes from Isaiah, Jeremiah, from the Psalms, that the issue of joy keeps rising up. And certainly with the Prophets, because it is directly related to the prophet in us working to bring both the inner joy in ourselves and joy and justice for others.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.