

Daily Meditation 01-29-2024

A Revised Hail Mary Prayer For Our Post-Modern Times

Good morning.

We are meditating these days on the well known Hail Mary prayer, which is used in the Rosary and many other rituals in the Christian tradition.

We're pointing out there are really two versions. One is a 16th century version, which is the one currently employed. The earlier one, the 12th century version, is really quite different in tone and in language. It goes like this:

*Hail Mary full of grace,
the Lord is with you, untroubled Maiden.
You are blessed among women,
you who brought forth peace to people
and glory to the angels.
Blessed too is the fruit of your womb,
who by Grace made it possible for us to be His heirs.*

And it does not have the much more pessimistic and patriarchal ending, that the 16th century version had:

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.

And I point out that the great French historian, John Delumeau, wrote an important and substantive study, called *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture, 13th to 18th Centuries*.

And as I'll point out, as we go along in the next few daily meditations, he says that the 16th century was a crescendo of this guilt culture. And I think this guilt is very present in that 16th century addendum to the Hail Mary prayer.

He says "a new fear was birthed, the fear of oneself. It included the dread of God, instead of the fear of God."

Now the phrase "fear of God" really means, in its foundation, I believe, the awe of God -- because awe implies fear. Thomas Aquinas talks about there being a chase to fear, which is a good thing. It's about awe. And a servile fear -- servile fear is a negative thing. And I think there's a certain servile fear that goes along with the dread of God, that Jean Delumeau names for us.

So I think it's appropriate to bring this prayer into the 21st century into these postmodern times, and to add a new ending, which I propose, the new ending being:

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us heirs and co-workers of God, at the hour of our creativity. Amen.

Because creativity is that divine spark in us, that is that imitation of the Divine. The Creator is creativity par excellence. Thomas Aquinas frequently finds God is the artist of artists.

So this whole pre-modern tradition holds up. Creativity is a very important dimension to our spirituality, to our depth, to our nobility, and to our responsibility. It's our creativity that gets us into trouble, as well as gets us out of trouble!

And, as over my shoulder is depicted the creativity of Miles Davis, also gets us moving, literally -- in dance, and in social institutions and so forth.

And remember that the great Otto Rank, the great psychologist who died young in 1939, he says that "pessimism comes from the repression of creativity." And this is endemic to patriarchy, because creativity, as Carl Jung says, comes from the "realm of the mothers." So patriarchy is busy repressing creativity.

But what we need to survive today, is a new creativity, a birthing of new ways of finding energy, that are healthy for the planet, as well as ourselves; and of course, new ways to move beyond war, and beyond hatred, and the rest.

So all this is calling in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of creativity. And Meister Eckhart himself makes an explicit connection between the Annunciation, the angel telling Mary, that the Holy Spirit will come over her to bring forth the Christ, the connection between that and the Holy Spirit, who works in our creative imaginations. It's the same thing, he says.

And Thomas Aquinas said the same thing: The Spirit that hovered over the waters at the beginning of creation, hovers over the mind of the artist at work.

So adding on this prayer to the 12th century version, I think makes it especially rich for our time. It speaks to the needs of our time. We need a creative explosion, an explosion not of new ways to kill one another, but new ways to preserve the Earth, and to celebrate the amazing planet on which we live.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.