

## Daily Meditation 03-31-24

### Easter & Resurrection: Hope and Promise in Dark Times

Good morning. A blessed Easter and Resurrection to all of you.

I'm very moved by many of the citations in Thomas Aquinas today, in his profound meditations on Easter and Resurrection. I especially love this line, "the life of the risen Christ has spread to all humanity, in common resurrection."

I also love, toward the end of the meditation, he says: "A kind of new creation, as the psalmist says, send forth your spirit and they will create it, and you will renew the face of the earth." That was a prayer I heard often when I was a young Dominican. I always loved it, it always moved me as a young person, that "you will renew the face of the earth, send forth your Spirit." The Holy Spirit does that: it renews things, and it renews the face of the earth. And God knows we need a lot of renewing today, in humanity, and in our relationships to the Earth, which we have abused so regularly.

Then another line that really hits me, and hits me hard, is his saying in the middle of the meditation: "Let us try to rise spiritually from the soul's death, to a life of justice. Rise, you who sleep, and rise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you." (Ephesians 5:14) "Blessed and holy is one who has part in the first resurrection." (John 26) This is the first resurrection to rise from sleep.

So now I'm going to turn to Hildegard of Bingen, because she, writing about 100 years before Aquinas, used this very language herself, and developed it wonderfully. I'm borrowing from my book, "Hildegard of Bingen: A Saint for Our Times," under the Roman numeral, the Introduction part, page 22. (actually it's page 23) She says, "We need to rise from our sleep, and live with passion and blood, in order to contribute to making the Cosmic Wheel go around."

So she too was calling us to rise, and live with passion and blood. She said, "O human, why do you live without passion? Why do you live without blood?" So this rising up in our work, is nothing less than making the Cosmic Wheel go around. And she painted a picture of that Cosmic Wheel, that is in my book on her "Illuminations," her paintings.

But also on page 14 (arabic 14), she says this: she says again that we are asleep, and that it is time to wake up. And I point out that "the Buddha" means "the awakened one." So here we have an archetype of waking up, that is found both in Paul and in Christianity, and the whole resurrection story. Especially the first resurrection is about waking up. And this is at the heart of the teaching and the personhood of Buddha.

And I cite Kabir, the 15th century Indian mystic: "You have been sleeping for millions and millions of years. Why not wake up this morning?" All that is gathered up in the meaning of resurrection, as laid out by Thomas Aquinas, by Paul, and by Hildegard of Bingen.

Then on page 105, she addresses the topic again. She wrote a letter to the Abbot Kuno of Budenberg, the original monastery that she was in with men. An all-gender monastery, which she left with her sisters, because they were not being treated justly. And she writes "I have heard from the Lord, O human being, why do you sleep?" She's addressing the Abbot, her ex-Abbot. "Why do you have no taste for the good works that sound in God's ears like a symphony? Why do you not search out the house of your heart, and renounce your brazen unruliness?"

And she writes, "O Justice, you are without a homeland, you are a foreigner in the city of those who make up fables, and choose these over the tasks assigned to them, for their own will." This seems to me to apply to contemporary politics too, that there is a lot of justice being without a homeland, foreigners in the city who are making up fables -- a fable that justice is not at the heart of authentic government, and healthy politics.

She says on page 103, she wrote the Pope: "O Man, you will be so shaken that the strength of your feet, the feet in which you now stand, will disappear. For you don't love the king's daughter Justice. But as in delirium asleep, you push her away from you. She will flee from you, unless you call her back."

And she says, "As a visible shepherd, you need to rise up and hasten quickly to Justice." So the rising up, Hildegard keeps saying in so many words, is a rising up "from sleeping to justice." That's the phrase she uses. "All who are not engaged in Justice are sleeping, and they need a resurrection in this life, not the next." Which is exactly what Aquinas is talking about in the first resurrection. The first resurrection is waking up in this lifetime.

There's so much more that Aquinas has to teach about resurrection, I really recommend it, in pages 359 to 364, in my book on "Sheer jJoy."

Now he also celebrates Mary Magdalene, who had such a prominent role in the Resurrection. And he says about Mary Magdalene: "A triple privilege was placed upon Mary Magdalene -- First, Prophecy, because she deserved to see the angels for prophecies between the angels and the people. Second, the dignity of the angels, because she saw Christ, on whom the angels want to look. Third, the apostolic office, to be sure. She became the apostle of the apostles, because the announcing of the Lord's Resurrection to the disciples was entrusted to her. She first announced the words of life --" this is in his commentary on St. John's Gospel -- "the boldness of the woman is amazing," he says about Mary Magdalene.

And he talks about how she said to the gardener, "I'm looking for the body that has been taken away. This removes the fear of the sight of a dead person, and impels her to try to do more than she is able, that is to carry away the corpse." This is Aquinas talking, as to what Paul means in Corinthians, "Love hopes all things." She wished to take him away, bring him to another unknown place, so that Jewish leaders would not harm the lifeless body.

So he calls her a prophet, and apostle to the apostles, and all the rest. And that's part of the energy of this Day of Resurrection. So I encourage you to read those other pages, where I gather his profound teachings on resurrection. The first resurrection is waking up in this lifetime. And the second is the return of the body. But the first resurrection, he says, is the resurrection of the soul, and the deepening of our spirituality.

He says Christ didn't need this. He didn't need the first resurrection, because he was already awakened. But WE need it. And that second resurrection of the body? You don't have to worry about that. That comes later. But for Jesus, it was really his only resurrection. He didn't have to undergo the first resurrection.

A lot of food here, I think, for contemplation and for action. Thank you. See you next week. And Happy Easter to you all.