

Daily Meditation 11-25-24

The Hidden Spirituality of Men: A Word to my Brothers

Good morning.

In today's daily meditation, I'm sharing with you a letter, the first part of a letter that I wrote some 17 years ago to my brothers, that is to men, and that was at the time that I published my book *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine*. And again, we're dealing with the sacred masculine, because I think that was a very deep part of the last election -- not the sacred part, but the issue of masculinity.

For there are many ways to look at the election. A very significant dimension was how many young men voted for the winner. And I think it's really important that we think about this and meditate about it, because there's so many areas that the winner fails in, when it comes to healthy masculinity. And part of the drama and the sadness and the angst of our time, the question of whether men can develop themselves more fully, and contribute more positively to the future, not only of this country, but the world. Because the rise of fascism in our time, the rise of authoritarianism, the attraction and allurements of it -- all that is a patriarchal issue, the return of patriarchy in spades. Fascism is clearly a political form of control, power-over. Power, that is the reptilian brain, is at home with. And it doesn't leave much room for the maternal brain, the brain of kinship and passion-with, of compassion, of the motherly dimensions of the soul that are in all of us, men and women alike.

Now, I just returned from a Sunday church, and in the Episcopal Church, as in the Catholic Church, today is the Feast of Christ the King. And it was interesting to me, that the preacher and the celebrant today was a woman, because I go to the Episcopal Church, now. She spoke about this feast, and she pointed out the historical context for it. The Pope declared it in 1925. And what was 1925?

Well, there was an explosion of fascism, especially in the Pope's country of Italy, and communism at the time, and secularism. And so the Pope was trying to draw Christian attention to the passage in Mark's gospel, where Pilate is suggesting Jesus, and asked if He is a king, and so forth. And Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

So this does introduce politics, doesn't it, to religion. And that's not necessarily a negative thing, because Gandhi said that: people who don't enact politics and religion do

not know what religion is about. Because it is about bringing our values into the public sphere, which is the political sphere, and being critical. And of course, that's what the gospel story tells: that we need to be critical, think through Jesus's eyes and ears and thought, about the political decisions that we make, and the structures that we support and those that we don't support.

So in my introduction to this book, *The Hidden Spirituality of Men*, I go through quite a few reasons for the title. Why do I say that the spirituality of man is very often hidden? So let me share some of that with you:

Because Western culture is still a dualistic patriarchy, that values thinking over feeling, material wealth over spiritual, scientific fact over intuitive knowledge, men over women, and heterosexuals over homosexuals. So that's one reason that masculinity lies hidden under more sacred dimensions of masculinity.

Another: Because men are rarely rewarded, and often mocked, for openly expressing their deepest feelings, whether of joy or sensitivity or pain. And of course, I attribute a lot of that to the killing of Father Sky, during the mechanistic, scientific time, when we were told the Universe was a machine, a time of course that we're trying to emerge from now. But it's slow going.

Because men carry wounds inside, they would rather forget or put aside than admit are there. Because modern religions are out of touch with their mystical traditions, whose language and concepts help us cope with our deepest experiences, our dark nights of the soul.

Now, in driving home today from church, there was a wonderful dialogue on NPR Radio between a man and a woman about quilt making. And the woman had just written an article about it, and how she was an activist on behalf of Palestinians. And then when October 7th came, when the horrible invasion of Israel came, and over 1,000 innocent people were slaughtered, and several hundred taken prisoner on October 7th, and then the response that is still going on, this war that has killed over 43,000 Palestinians, most of them children and women.

She says she was just beside herself, and she couldn't sleep, etc, etc. And then she just stumbled on the possibility of making quilts, and that that has really saved her. And then the man on the program said something similar, that he too was quilt making, as well as being a journalist.

He was interviewing her, but both of them, especially she stressed that the scientific evidence now, of something focusing like that, is a kind of cleansing of the mind.

Because it's, well, it's Art As Meditation. She didn't use that word, but that's what it is. And she's talking about how it saved her, literally. She's now quilt-making six hours a day, and she says she's stepped back from a lot of compulsive listening to the news and social media and so forth. When she quilts, she's in another world, and she can feel it in her body. It's a physical thing to quilt. Well, all art is a physical thing.

But again, I want to point out how Art As Meditation is very important at this time of strife and chaos. And it doesn't mean, as she said, "I haven't left the world. I'm still engaged, but I'm also engaged with keeping myself healthy," she said, "for the struggle that lies ahead."

Now, other reasons that spirituality can be hidden, especially with men, is *because often spiritual truth and understanding defy language, and live in silence. And what is not lassoed by words is considered secret and kept hidden.*

So like William James says, one of the marks of mysticism is not being able to describe it. So silence is an integral part, the Via Negativa, being still. So one is not prone to be extrovert in describing or speaking of spiritual experiences.

Because men are not supposed to cry. And so they learn to hide their grief as well as their joy.

Because anthropocentric culture puts more value on human life and needs and rules, than in connecting humbly to the vast cosmos. This is built into turning our back on Father Sky, you see.

Because men sometimes work so hard that they do not have time or space for opening their hearts.

Because in an attempt to respect the women's movement, some men (not all) feel compelled to silence themselves, and hide any so-called unacceptable maleness. So there is this confusion around this, when women are coming into their own power, their own identity more fully. Of course, this affects not only one's relationship with women, but also one's relationship to oneself. It raises questions of identity, and how masculinity has to evolve, just as femininity is evolving.

Because men sometimes confuse religion and spirituality, and in the process, run from their own journey with spirit.

So the fact that more and more people are not found in churches on Sundays today in the West, whether Europe or North America, and even South America. But what we have found through our Cosmic Masses, because they're based not on reading and being read to and saying prayers by rote -- but rather by dance, with the assistance of the new art forms of DJ and VJ, rap and so forth -- what we find, is a very high percentage of men attend, and really participate in our Cosmic Masses. And one reason is that a very high percentage of DJs are men. I say roughly 80%. So the men find a home there. This is a familiar way of getting into one's feelings: Dance, that is. And of course, dance is an ancient way to pray, and it involves the lower chakras.

And all this is so important, to both men and women, that we be invited to pray with all of our seven chakras, and not just with the head, and certainly not just with reading prayers. Rilke said, over 100 years ago that “the work of the eyes is finished now.” The work of the eyes, that is reading and reading prayers in church. “Go and do heart work,” he says, “on all the images that you carry within you.”

So there are a number of other reasons why I talk about why spirituality is hidden in men today. And it is my hope that we can release it.

Thank you. See you next week.