

Monday: Holy Week—A Dangerous Memory

Friends,

An accurate remembrance of Jesus' torture and murder during Holy Week and of His response of nonviolent love to the violence directed against Him is a very dangerous memory. It is dangerous first of all because it is a memory that ends in Jesus' total destruction, with His friends betraying Him, running away and hiding in fear for their lives. All hope that Jesus, the incarnational paragon of nonviolence and nonviolent love was going to bring about significant social, political or religious change in things as they are and as they always have been was—as of three o'clock in the afternoon on Friday of Holy Week—as dead as Jesus. Jesus was dead wrong; the meek never have and never will possess the earth. The violent rule. The default option of all ruling power comes from the barrel of a gun. The violent may tolerate the likes of the nonviolent Jesus for a while but can and will do-him-in if ever they feel the need to do so. As of Saturday of Holy Week, Jesus changed nothing socially, politically or religiously in Israel or in the world. That is a dangerous memory for any Christian who espouses any rendering of Constantinian Christianity—conservative, liberal or radical.

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A second reason that an accurate remembrance of Holy Week and of the Passion of Jesus in the *anamnesis* of the Eucharistic Prayer are potentially dangerous memories is that memory defines known history. If the only memory available is the memory of those who were the victors, who successfully prevailed, then the very identity of people is formed from the narration of these memories and from the values, attitudes and beliefs the victors and the successful embody and encourage. Generally there is hardly any remembrance in history of the losers, the oppressed, the forgotten, the broken, the victims—like Jesus of Nazareth.

When secular and religious memory is controlled by the 1%, it is assured that what they include and what they erase, what they emphasize and what they downplay, what they glorify and what they ignore in memory, and therefore in history, has as its purpose creating an identity for human beings, which is thoroughly consistent with the interests and needs of the 1%. As Johannes Metz writes, “*Selective memory that remembers only the triumph of the powerful and “screens out” the agony of their victims, creates a false consciousness of our past and an opiate for our present.*”

Since grace works through nature and not independent of it, the primal experiential memory during Holy Week should be the primal natural phenomena of Holy Week, the agony of the victim Jesus at the hands of the powerful, and by empathic extension the agony of all victims of the “great ones.” But it is not. Such a memory is too dangerous to the 1% of this world, who have built their victories and success on an ongoing, *en masse*, agonizing crucifixion of human beings. But if memory is distorted, by commission or by omission, to that extent it will distort any spiritual, metaphysical or mystical experience and/or interpretation derived from it.

Martin Luther said of the princes of Germany who were protecting him from the violence of the Church of Rome but who were also being attacked by the peasants they had been brutally oppressing for generations, “*It is easier today for a prince to get to heaven by killing a peasant*

than by prayer.” The memory reflected upon in sermons and homilies and pieties during Holy Week, like the memory presented during the Eucharist, is composed and mediated, since the time of Constantine, by the victorious 1% and their kept scribes. Think about that and the dearth of concern about the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies in all the Churches of Christianity today and for the last 1700 years.