

Lent II Year A 2011

“Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?”

I never imagined I would have liked the movie *Avatar*....y’all seen it? Well all the promos just looked like blue screen special effects magic.... explosions of cosmic proportions....the themes were all already most apparent....anti-militarism; anti-capitalism....the ecology....hyper-consumerism...the nature of God, the one on Pandora (the moon of a distant planet in the movie) is female....I figured I’d leave the younger generation to see this one....But one Saturday afternoon I was just killing time and I scrolled through Comcast on demand and there it was....(on special \$3.75)... The movie was two and a half hours long it said....so I decided to watch a little of it.

After some thirty minutes or so I was hooked....I ended up loving it... In spite of the heavy-handed themes....and the special effects without end.... still it is a great story....I’ve seen it three times now....and have taken something from it each time I’ve seen it....The indigenous humanoids of the movie who are being exploited by a corporation with military might from earth are called the Na’vi...and one of the earthlings, a wounded former marine is sent into a genetically engineered replica Na’vi body, and is sent in to their world with some sort of consciousness transfer (best I can explain it)...sent in to co-habitate with this indigenous people....The military-industrial honchos see this as a spy mission....but increasingly the protagonist finds himself intrigued with the Na’vi ways....and eventually joins their tribe and falls in love with a native princess of course causing all kinds of complications....the big hungry corporation is encroaching closer and closer to the Na’vi’s Holy Ground, because wouldn’t you know it, that’s Where a mother load of superconductive ore is deposited....Should we just watch the movie?

But having read this gospel selection for this week from the gospel of John, I am reminded of a scene that I don’t think I caught at my first watching of this movie....It is a scene in which the protagonist, the wounded former marine is being taught the ways of the Na’vi....It is about his coming of age, joining the tribe...and he is told by his teacher that one must always be born twice....You know in our cultural parlance it is popular to say one is born again (but we won’t go there)...but I think there is some truth to it... something profound about it....The first birth is our physical entering this realm....and our second birth is when we come of age in it....most all religions of the world mark this coming of age....It is the time when we

cease living for ourselves and we join the larger community, and how we are nurtured into serving the greater good of the community....salvation, as it were, then becomes a communal reality not a personal one....In our small corner of the religious landscape we call this coming of age Baptism....and if Baptized as infants then Confirmation is the rite we use to confirm publically our Baptisms....Marks of being born twice....Once for ourselves, and then being born for the greater good....a second birth for the greater good, the salvation of the many...the salvation of all.

But the point is, there is a rite of passage in being human, an outward and visible sign that we are to be born into a greater reality....a reality of flesh and Spirit, as John puts it....a reality in which we become world changers....a reality in which we become wind and light... in touch, mature, sentient to the world around us....bearing with great sensitive power the light of dignity to our world....sent out as might a young Indian brave....to further the configuration of the world....healing it, nurturing it....standing against the evil found in it.

The word apostles as you know means, the sent ones....the ones sent to a world upon their second birth....sent from the very womb of Heaven which is after all the stuff of earth....the so-called divisions between heaven and earth get decidedly comingled in this Gospel....and the sent ones in this gospel are the ones sent to befriend their world....to do the truth....born from the womb that birthed the earth and stars....God's master builder, she... the sent out ones for love as it was in the beginning

So what I want to say to you this morning is simply this: that we are to make ready for our second birth....some already in their occurring...some maturing...some a struggle...some yet to come....all works in process...but pay attention to its coming because, don't doubt, the world depends on yet a new Advent, a new birth, a new way.... the new sent ones... a new coming of the light, like a mighty wind that bears all promise....Be ready, dear beloved of God....Be ready and able for it.