

Today's Gospel reading has a strong and undeniable relevance to the Human Condition. In my English classes at Brevard High School, the Human Condition is something we have spent a great deal of time studying and applying to all things in life and literature. If you are unfamiliar with the Human Condition, it is defined as anything that every single human being, no matter where they live or how they are raised, experiences at some point in their life. All matters of the human condition fall under at least one of two states of being: love and fear. Every situation, emotion, or action a person experiences throughout their life falls under one of these two subheadings. Jealousy is fear of loss. Longing is perpetuated love. Hate and distrust are fear of what someone else is capable of. This rule can be applied to each and every aspect of life. And because everything can be broken down like this, nearly every statement in the Bible that is quoted from Jesus can be consolidated into one, simple sentence: "Love one another."

John writes that Jesus gave us this new commandment as a parting gift. Jesus tells this to the Jews and his disciples alike. That last axiom transcends rank or position and applies to all people Jesus speaks to, all people of the world, really. He is condensing all of the previous commandments and every word of guidance he ever spoke into a single rule. If one follows this rule always, and all of their actions towards others are based in love, they won't steal from others, cheat on their spouses, or lie about them... and they definitely won't be killing anyone.

The french dramatist Jean Anouilh once used the line, "Love is, above all else, the gift of oneself." So, love, in its purest form, is giving yourself over fully and honestly to all that you do. Learning all that you can when you're in school, not for the grade, but for your own, personal knowledge. It's working your hardest, even if the boss isn't looking. It is working at something every day until it is routine and you are proficient at that practice. Not because you are told you should, but because you are capable and it is something you enjoy. Anouilh defines love as living in the moment

and giving your complete attention to all that you do. I think that this is very much what Jesus meant when he told the disciples that he was going where they could not follow, but that they should love one another even in his absence. He wanted his people to love and get all of the good out of life, even if he couldn't be there to show them how. He didn't want them to spend their time in fear. Fearing that they could not continue to exist without his guidance or fear that they would never see him again, but he wanted them to love and give themselves every remaining opportunity to spread love. And by doing so, continue Jesus' mission of spreading God and His word.

When racking my brain in preparation for this sermon, I amused myself when all of my “real-world connections” and stories somehow related back to Star Wars. But as I do not intend to steal Christian's thunder, though some may call it tradition, I continued to search until I remembered another strong example of living in love to the best of one's ability. And it happens to fall outside the realm of Star Wars, but maybe not far.

The movie Avatar recently came out on DVD, but before that, I went with a group of friends to see it in the theatre. Against our better judgement, we spent the extra few bucks and saw the 3-D version. We were not disappointed. This movie is likely one of the greatest cinematic achievements ever. If you haven't seen it, you need to. This film will change the way you see the world.

The story takes place in the year 2154 when humans are mining a precious mineral called unobtainium on Pandora, a lush moon in the Alpha Centauri star system. The expansion of the mining colony threatens the existence of a local tribe of Na'vi—a wise and respectful, blue-skinned, humanoid species indigenous to Pandora. These “people,” for lack of a better term, have learned to live in perfect harmony with nature. The film's title refers to the genetically engineered Na'vi-human hybrid bodies called Avatars used by a team of researchers to interact with the natives of Pandora. As Jake Sully, a paraplegic former marine, uses his avatar to become very close to the Na'vi, he studies and begins to better understand them, with the ultimate goal of gaining enough intelligence to allow the human military to easily mine the unobtainium without a full-on war against the Na'vi. Through his daily

communications with the humanoids, he learns that it is not possible to reach the metal without severely damaging if not completely eliminating the Na'vi. Their entire culture is based around the mother goddess Eywa, who resides in a single large tree they call Tree of Souls or Hometree. Hometree has such a powerful healing ability that it can bring one back from recent death. It is also conveniently located directly on top of massive deposits of unobtainium. Naturally, the human military feels it is worth the risk and plans to simply remove the tree and obtain the unobtainium at all costs. At this point Sully has learned to love the Na'vi and see the value in their ways. He is also learning the connection they have with their planet and its other inhabitants. His personal connection with the Na'vi and Pandora grows daily and the Na'vi begin to trust him. That is, until they learn of the humans' plan to remove Hometree, then all trust in Sully is lost. They do not see the distinction between him and the rest of the humans. Sully knows that it is possible for the Na'vi to fight back and win against the humans but he is the only one who is capable of showing them how. Left on his own in his avatar, he is forced to continue to learn the land and its ways without assistance from the natives. Of course, he does this successfully, and defeats the humans largely on his own. The problem then remains that Sully is not really capable of living on Pandora without his avatar. The planet is not fit for human life, but he no longer has the option of returning to the humans, nor does he want to and it doesn't help that the Na'vi still don't completely trust him. As Sully has been completely immersed in the Na'vi way for so long, he begins to pray to Eywa, their mother goddess. And not just talk to her, but genuinely ask for her help and have faith in her. The Na'vi realize this is a sign that his love for them and their lifestyle surpasses any act or false display that they suspected. They know that his actions can only be explained by genuine love for their culture and that he belongs with them indefinitely. They all begin to pray and in a display of lights and climactic symphonic music Eywa permanently transforms Sully into a Na'vi.

Some have criticized Avatar, calling it a beautified Pocahontas, and I'll admit there are striking similarities in the story line. And the unprecedented graphics in the movie are breathtaking, but there is something that Avatar illustrates far more successfully than Pocahontas and *that* is the **necessity of**

love. It shows that one must love fully and completely and give themselves over to this life in order to be the person they want to be. In order to be the person their god wants them to be. In order to be the person Jesus wanted us to be. One of my favorite songs we sing is “They will know we are Christians by our Love,” and in what other way *could* they know? We are known and recognized by our actions. If we do not love and carry out our actions in nothing but love, we have nothing to show for ourselves.