

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

July 7, 2019

Spiritual Ponderings

Faith & Film

Avengers Infinity War

Synopsis: The Avengers Infinity War movie is the first of two movies that place the Avengers (Earth's Mightiest Heroes with allies) against Thanos. Thanos is an evil Titan (god-like creature) who desires to collect the six infinity stones to destroy half the life in the universe. To make a long story short the only way for the Avengers to prevent Thanos from getting the last stone is for them to destroy it. Unfortunately destroying the last stone would mean killing the superhero named Vision. Refusing to kill Vision, they attempt to separate the stone from his person unfortunately Thanos arrives before this can be done and he gets the last stone. With all six stones in his position Thanos snaps his finger and activates all the stones. The resulting spell (for lack of better word) results in half of all life in the universe turning to ash. There seems to be no rhyme or reason as to whom dies. The movie ends shortly after that with our heroes defeated.



Spiritual Insights:

The first spiritual insight comes from the idea that Thanos believes that he is actually a humanitarian – a protector of life despite the fact that he is out to destroy half the life in the universe. It is revealed that there was a great famine on Thanos's home world when he was younger and the famine was blamed on over population. He now believes that he needs to activate the stones in order to stop the universe from being over populated. He also believes that this is humanitarian since the stones will destroy life with no consideration to wealth, power, prestige, etc.

St. Thomas Aquinas believed that no one ever did evil for the sake of evil. Instead he believed that the person committing evil committed evil because he mistakes the wrong thing for the good. In this case Thanos's childhood trauma blinds him from seeing that the real good does not consist in destroying half of all the life in universe. Often we assume that another person does evil for the sake of evil instead of seeing their evil action resulting from some sort of woundedness. This is important because often we try to reason with these people instead of helping them heal and when they won't listen to reason we become angry and hurt ourselves.

The second spiritual insight follows in that it is easy to see wiping out half the life in the universe is an evil act. Sadly, our country is wiping out half of the world's population through abortion and euthanasia. (If you had an abortion or supported someone in getting an abortion, please check out Project Rachel or Project Joseph in order to begin your journey of healing). More people have died through abortion than through war. On the other hand we see our heroes or unwilling to sacrifice one life (Vision) and do everything in their power to save him.

The third spiritual insight comes about from watching our heroes trying to work together to stop Thanos. We know that each of them are special in their own way but often they are unaware of how their pride prevents them from being a more cohesive unit. It is nice though to see the heroes work together against the greater threat after the events of Captain America Civil War.

The final spiritual insight comes from the realization that there are people out there who see God as someone who is more like Thanos than like the Blessed Trinity. I am becoming more and more convinced that there is a lot of people infected with a subconscious form of paganism. Paganism simply meaning that one sees his or her deity as someone who has to be kept happy otherwise the deity will inflict bad things upon them. Whenever we say "why is God punishing me" we are practicing this modern form of paganism. Jesus reveals to us that our God is a loving God who cares deeply for His creation and desires to spend eternity with us.



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

July 14, 2019

Spiritual Ponderings

Faith & Film

Wonder Woman

Synopsis: Wonder Woman tells the story of an Amazon princess named Diana quest to stop the ancient Greek God during World War I. According to the movie, Zeus and Ares battled for control of humanity and in the midst of the battle Ares was severely wounded and Zeus killed. Before Zeus dies he created a group of warrior women called the Amazons and placed them on a magically hidden island.

During World I, Steve Trevor a US spy at a secret German Base steals the notebook of an evil scientist that includes the instruction for an evil chemical weapon. As he flees the island with the book he is shot down and crash lands on the Amazon's island. The Germans that were pursuing him were soon defeated by the Amazon but not before they were able to kill a few of the warrior women.

Diana, feeling that it is her destiny goes to England and then to the front. At the front she engages the German General who she thought was Ares and kills him only to discover that Ares was really disguising himself as a British political leader who had been promoting an armistice. Refusing to join Ares, Diana defeats him but not before Steve Trevor has dies heroically saving the world by preventing the chemical weapon from being dispersed.

Spiritual Insights:

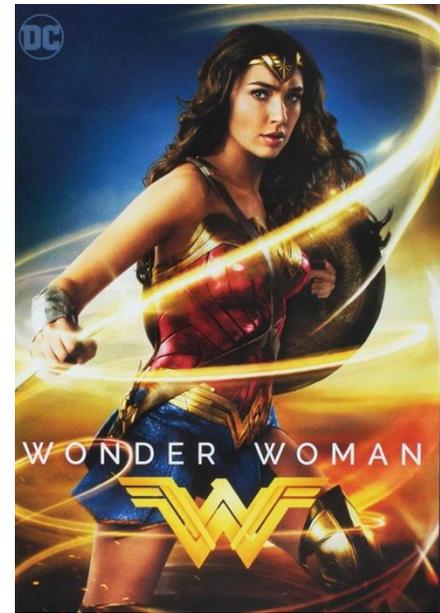
The first spiritual insight that I saw in the movie was that sometimes evil can disguise itself under the cloak of appearing to be good. Wonder Woman assumes that the German leader Ludendorff is really Hades in disguised. She kills him only to discover that he was not Hades. He was only a normal man high on a special steroid type drug. Sir Patrick Morgan, an English diplomat who talks about the need for an armistice to be signed, reveals that he is really Hades in disguised. This revelation in the movie reminded me that sometimes the devil has no problem using any tactic to get what he wants. He will make us think that prayer is too easy to accomplish anything or he will make us think it is too hard to pray all the time. Either way, the devil does not care as long as he prevents us from praying.

The second spiritual insight in the movie follows along the idea that the revelation that Hades was really a person talking about peace. I think it reminds us that what is morally right does not depend upon what we think. There is such a thing as an objective truth. This plot line from the movie also reminded of the following quote from Abraham Lincoln: "Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right."

A third spiritual insight from the movie comes from the part of the movie where Steve Trevor puts together a special team to help him take Diane to the battle line front. He recruits Sameer, Charlie, and Chief Napi. As Catholics, we need to remember that our Church teaches us that God does not save us as individuals but rather as a group (as a Church). Jesus sent out his disciples two-by-two. The early Church in the Acts of the Apostles followed Jesus example and sent Paul and Barnabas out as a pair. A reminder that the Catholic Faith was never meant to be lived alone. The fact that this team is really a group of misfits, is also a bonus because the Church is not filled with perfect people.

The fourth insight in the movie is a reminder that we should not look forward to war. Growing up Diana looks forward to seeing battle but then seeing the cost of war, she quickly becomes to dislike the idea of war.

The last spiritual insight from the movie, is that a truce is not the same as forgiveness. Hades desires the German and the Allies to sign a peace treaty called an armistice. He believes that simply stopping the fighting and not addressing the



underlying issues of the war will lead to a future war. True peace means more than just stopping the physical violence. It means learning to forgive and allowing God to heal the underlying causes of the conflict.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

July 21, 2019

Spiritual Ponderings

Faith & Film

Christopher Robin



Synopsis: The movie begins with Christopher Robin telling his friends from the Hundred Acre Wood that he would be leaving soon to go away to boarding school. After boarding school, Christopher Robin meets a woman named Evelyn and has a daughter named Madeline. He also serves in the British Army during World War II. The movie picks up with him again as an adult working for Winslow Luggage. This is a job that often keeps him away from his family.

Back in the Hundred Acre woods, Pooh discovers that he is all alone and cannot find any of his friends. Pooh decided to go through a magical door that leads him to London where he runs into a grown-up Christopher. Christopher Robin is amazed to see Pooh alive in the real world and quickly decides he has to take Pooh back to the woods. Christopher Robin reunites Winnie the Pooh with the other friends in the Hundred Acre Wood and then returns home. Christopher Robin forgot his briefcase though in the Hundred Acre Wood and so the gang, meeting up with Madeline for the first time set out on another adventure to get Christopher Robin his briefcase back.

The movie ends with Christopher realizing that nothing is more important than his family and him coming up with a great idea that saves the luggage company.

Spiritual Insights:

The first spiritual insight I saw in the movie was the lesson that Winnie the Pooh and Christopher Robin talk about and that is the idea of doing nothing. Christopher Robin explains to Pooh that it is important sometimes to just do nothing. I believe this is because we sometimes define ourselves by what we do or the money we make. We need to stop do stuff and simply be. We need to prevent business from being coming a status symbol. When we stop and do nothing we also learn that God loves us even when we are doing nothing because God's love is unconditional.

Thomas Merton put it this way:

Some of us need to discover that we will not begin to live more fully until we have the courage to do and see and taste and experience much less than usual... And for a man who has let himself be drawn completely out of himself by his activity, nothing is more difficult than to sit still and rest, doing nothing at all. The very act of resting is the hardest and most courageous act he can perform.

Sometimes we keep ourselves so busy that we don't know what is going on in our own lives.

The second spiritual insight comes from the relationship between Christopher and his daughter Madeline. Christopher claims that he loves her but he spends so very little time with her. It reminded me of the song the "Cat's in the Cradle" by Cat Stevens. The song ending verse is: "

I've long since retired and my son's moved away - I called him up just the other day - I said, I'd like to see you if you don't mind - He said, I'd love to, dad, if I could find the time - You see, my new job's a hassle, and the kids have the flu - But it's sure nice talking to you, dad - It's been sure nice talking to you - and as I hung up the phone, it occurred to me - He'd grown up just like me - My boy was just like me

At the end of the song the father realizes that his family did not need all the money he brought home as much as they needed him to spend time with them.

The third spiritual insight comes from the diversity of Winnie the Pooh and his gang are. In addition to Winnie the Pooh, you have timid Piglet, Bouncing Tiger, Kanga and Roo, Rabbit, and Eeyore. Each has a different personality and each allows the other to be themselves. We should appreciate the difference in others and allow others to be themselves.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

July 28, 2019

Spiritual Ponderings

Faith & Film

Thor Ragnarok

I had planned on at sometime watching *Avengers End Games* by now and making that movie the last of my movie reflections for the year. I just could not bring myself to spend three hours in a movie theatre knowing that at some point I would have to get up and used the restroom and with my luck I would probably miss an important part of the movie. I am therefore waiting for it to come out for home viewing. I will therefore reflect on another Marvel Movie **Thor Ragnarok**.



Synopsis: The movie begins with Thor battling a demon named Surtur because according to an ancient prophesy Surtur will bring about the destruction of Asgard. This destruction of Asgard is know to everyone as Ragnarok just like the end of earth is known as Armageddon. Thor ends up winning the battle and believes he has saved Asgard from eternal destruction.

Thor and Loki are reunited and sent by Dr. Strange to find Odin. Odin informs them that he is dying and his death will unleash their previously unknown of sister named Hela and Hela will have only one mission and that will be to enslave everyone. Hela returns and quickly takes over Asgard. She is slowed down by Heimdall who steals the sword that controls the space bridge.

Thor and Loki land on a planet named Sakaar and Thor is made a gladiator and must find for the ruler of Sakaar's amusement. The ruler of Sakaar is a unique individual known as the Grandmaster and his champion is none other than the Hulk. Hulk though is having a bit of an identity crisis and refuses to turn back to Bruce Banner or help Thor until he accidentally hears the voice of Natasha Romanoff on a recording.

Thor, Hulk, and Loki eventually return to Asgard and in order to defeat Hela, Thor resurrects the demon that he had killed at the beginning of the movie and allows the demon to destroy Asgard and Hela forever. Thor and what is left of the people of Asgard escape upon a spaceship to fine a new home.

The first spiritual insight that I see in this movie is that as much as Thor tries to prevent the end of Asgard he cannot. In the same way as much as we might want to stop death we cannot. Henry Nouwen in his book *Reaching Out* wrote the following:

Although we keep telling each other and ourselves that we will not live forever and that we are going to die soon, our daily actions, thoughts and concerns keep revealing to us how hard it is to fully accept the reality of our own statements... Indeed, it takes only a small disruption to lay our illusions of immortality bare and to reveal how much we have become victimized by our surrounding world suggesting to us that we are "in control."

What if Thor had been spending more time with Odin and Loki then out trying to stop the inevitable?

The second spiritual insight comes from Hulk's relationship with Thor. When Thor finds Hulk again, he expects to find the same old friend that he knew before. He has no idea what type of emotional turmoil Hulk/Bruce have been going through. In one sense he is quite literally not himself. Eventually he finds himself and Thor is ready to forgive him. Some times friends hurt us not because they are mad at us but because they are hurting themselves. It is important to try to have compassion and understand where they are coming from so that it will be easier to offer forgiveness.

The third spiritual insight is that endings are just new beginnings. Even though Thor has lost everything there are still more movies to be made. In the same way we come across endings in our lives – some good and some bad – but they are not the ultimate end and we still have a chance to grow.

C.S. Lewis put it this way: "You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending."

