

## March of the Penguins

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Sometimes a simple nature movie is more a theological document and more inspiring than many Biblical epics and cinematic attempts at being religious. **March of the Penguins** is such a movie. I encourage all to see it as a meditation on life, God, and the paschal mystery inherent in all things. This is full blown Incarnational Christianity without preaching a word that is overtly religious.

As revealed in the Trinity, all things are already in the natural “flow” of God’s life and love, and the only creatures who are free to oppose and resist that flow are human beings. All other creatures are what they are, accept it, live out their destiny with a kind of loving acceptance that we humans call “instinct” or “fate”. Why not just call it “providence”? Or even “faith”? We resist God’s providential patterns of death and resurrection, whereas the entire animal world seems to accept it with what can only be called heroic destiny. Yet we term ourselves “homo sapiens”, the wise humans! Wouldn’t it be our final great surprise to find that most of the animals make it to heaven, whereas only a few humans will be able to allow themselves such joy?

I could only think of Gerard Manley Hopkins’ poem “As Kingfishers Catch Fire” while watching the wonder of the life style of the Emperor Penguins in Antarctica. His Scotistic vision of “haecceity” (thisness) where each thing is created just to be itself in all its fullness, and that is what gives glory to God:

“Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:  
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;  
Selves—goes its self; *myself* it speaks and spells,  
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came*. . .  
Acts in God’s eye what in God’s eye he is—  
Christ. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,  
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his.”

These hidden and beautiful creatures have been loving secretly at the so called bottom of the world for millennia, and thereby living the Gospel with no eyes but God to enjoy them and reward them. Is this not true of all creatures and all of natural creation too? I personally believe that this is the deepest spiritual meaning of so called “natural law”: **each thing must act according to its nature, and bear the burden of that combined gift and curse.** Animals accept this paschal mystery, while we tell gays, the dying, many handicapped people, those seeking a false perfectionism, all wounded and broken ones, to be something other than what they really are. Our message is clear: “God does NOT love you as you are. God loves you as you aren’t!” What despair, or impossible idealism, this has communicated to so many. Leaving them condemned inside of their own bodies and lives instead of empowering them for full transformation.

What we see in this movie is simple penguins refusing to be condemned by their destiny, but making it into one great act of love. How much more exciting a world it could be if we could accept that loving destiny in ourselves, as well as the animals do. As well as your dog does! The last have again become first, and these “little ones” are, as Jesus promised, our real teachers. Go, enjoy this masterpiece of landscape, photography, music, and story. It will be an excellent way to keep holy the Sabbath Day.