*A Thin Red Line*

Today’s Gospel describes Jesus as the Shepherd, the Gatekeeper and the Gate. Jesus is Incarnate Love and Love is all Three. The problem is sometimes it seems like Love is nowhere or rather, instead of Love, the only gate is horror and pain. I want to share a movie that addresses various images of the way (life), or the gate.

In the movie about World War 2, *A Thin Red Line*, three characters have different concepts of God or Life. First, Nick Nolte’s character, an American general, sees Life as brutal, awarding only the strong. He explains how nature is at war. Vines wrap around trees. Trees fight, vying for sunlight. Animals hunt as predators in the night. Even bacteria fight in a microscopic war for survival. Humans are no different. Life is war.

Second, Sean Penn’s character, a commanding officer, sees the destruction, how civilians are victims of rape, torture and pillage. Where is God? There can be no Eternal Light when darkness pervades the heart of humanity. Who is good in the midst of such carnage and hatred? There is no God. He even mocks another character, played by Jim Caviezal, saying “Can you still see the Light? Where is it?”

Finally, Jim Caviezel’s character, a petty officer who goes AWOL repeatedly, escapes once again. This time he goes to a tropical island, finding himself immersed in sliver blue waters in the warmth of the sun. He splashes water at some native children, and they giggle, splashing back. Their innocent brown eyes glimmer with wonder. He dunks one boy in the water, lifting him out of the water, hoisting him high on his shoulders. The boy’s face beams with joy. For Jim’s character, The Light is all around us. We just have to look for it.

Caviezel, later in the movie, is gunned down in a flurry of machine gun fire, sacrificing his life for another. In the pitch darkness of war, one man sees the Light. Others see only darkness, pain or even nothing at all. Yet, Jim Caviezal, the unlikely hero, sees a glimmer through the greatest darkness, through pitch. Let us pray to be able to see a silver lining around the most sinister storm cloud.