

**My Sermon
Erica Allen
July 4, 2010**

Father asked us what God's noblest work was. Anna said men, but I said babies. Men are often bad; babies never are." Louisa May Alcott

Malidoma Some', born to the Dagara of Burkina Faso in Africa, writes in his book *Of Waters and the Spirit* about the special role of babies in his tribe. Each baby is seen as a spirit who has chosen to take on a body in order to carry out special projects in the world. While the baby is still in the womb, a special ceremony is held where the incoming soul takes on the voice of the mother and answers questions put to it by the priest including where the soul is from, what the gender is and why it has chosen to come here. The most important early relationship a baby will have is with its grandparents who help remind the child of what is said in the womb in order to guide it to fulfilling its purpose. The relationship is equally important to the grand parents who are hungry for the news from the world of spirit where soon they will return; babies are thought to be the purest form of communication from the spiritual world

You do not have to be Dagara to sense the spirituality emerging from babies, says One Marlyn Atteberry. "Holding my granddaughter, her fingers around my pinkie, her sixteen hour old eyes looking into mine, her mouth making tiny sucking sounds, is feeling her heart of the Divine" Nor do you have to be a grand parent: I remember looking into the still unfocused eyes of my nephew Hayden and wondering whether babies eyes take a awhile to focus on this material world because they are still focusing on the spiritual world they just left, when looking at holding touching or smelling a baby, perhaps all of us sense we are looking at touching and smelling the Divine.

That is from the book: "Thinking Outside the Church: 110 Ways to Connect With Your Spiritual Nature" by Jennifer Leigh Selig

Like all woman, becoming a mother changed me, I am not the woman (or girl) I was before, like the woman in my reading, I had many ideas about how my life would be, and whom I would become. Things that I thought were true and how that truth has changed. Today I am going to share with you something about my spiritual life as a mother. My story starts when I was 14 years old. I became a born again Christian. Yes, a bible thumping, praying in tongues, evangelizing Christian. (I was a "new believer counselor" for Billy Graham!!!!) My journey for the next 13 years would take me from very conservative churches (girls would always dress modestly in dress or skirts, never EVER pants sang hymns with an organ) to more "contemporary" churches. Where I wore black, lots of eyeliner and yes, wore...PANTS to church or jeans, or even shorts and flip flops. And we sang "praise songs" with guitars and drums!

What I wore at these churches and the music changed, three things did not....that Jesus become sin and died on the cross for me, rose again on the third day, Jesus was the only way to heaven and I was born sinful. I stayed with the church till was 27 years old.

When I left the church I had already realized it was the life of Jesus not his assassination that saved me. (I must admit I am no longer sure about the resurrection part) and I knew that there were many paths to enlightenment or heaven if you will. It was during the next 8 years as I

studied many faith traditions (even Catholic, relax folks, it was because of the awesome nun who said that the habit was archaic and on top of that was a pretty buchie Dyke. And she really rocked, I digress) it seemed that most of the religions that I was learning about did not (save for the Catholic Church) teach original sin. It was not till I had my first baby that it occurred to me that the teaching of original sin is wrong. Let me rephrase that, I knew then that I disagreed with it. I went into labor on a Thursday. After 27, some odd hours, the specifics in which I will spare you. I pushed out this being...he came from me! I was surprised! I even asked (M loves to hear this story) "Hay! Where did he come from?" As he was placed on my chest, I was in awe. Here in my arms, nursing at my breast was this new life. He was perfect. His eyes were open and alert, watching everything. We could tell at once that he was an old soul. He seemed to know everything (and thinks he still does!). He was so beautiful. Yes old, but new, pure. He was.....Holy. Like pure gold right out of the refiners fire.

The same was true when C was born...he was also just the most holy being...Faultless.

S-the girl-cub was an unexpected gift, a true miracle. Due to several factors, my pregnancy was very high risk. So I saw a Parinatolgest early. Every two weeks I went in was weighed, BP taken and had an ultrasound. It was so wonderful, so exciting and comforting to see before my very eyes, her grow and develop. When she was born she was a teeny tiny thing, less then 6lbs when we came home. But she was perfect and unblemished.

How on earth could anyone hold a new life and think to them selves " this is a dirty sinner?" and furthermore, when did Jesus ever say that we are born evil and sinful. The fact is he did not, he said the opposite:

Matthew 18:1-4

1 at about the same time, the disciples came to Jesus asking, "Who gets the highest rank in God's kingdom?"

2-5 For an answer Jesus called over a child, whom he stood in the middle of the room, and said, "I'm telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you're not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom. What's more, when you receive the childlike on my account, it's the same as receiving me."

here is another one:

Mark 10:13-16(The Message)

13-16The people brought children to Jesus, hoping he might touch them. The disciples shooed them off. But Jesus was irate and let them know it: "Don't push these children away. Don't ever get between them and me. These children are at the very center of life in the kingdom. Mark this: Unless you accept God's kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you'll never get in." Then, gathering the children up in his arms, he laid his hands of blessing on them.

And one more...

Luke 18:15-17 (The Message)

15-17 People brought babies to Jesus, hoping he might touch them. When the disciples saw it, they shooed them off. Jesus called them back. "Let these children alone. Don't get between them and me. These children are the kingdom's pride and joy. Mark this: Unless you accept God's kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you'll never get in."

On a completely primal level, I find myself, in a very real sense worshiping though my children, with the very act of mothering. We knew the girl-cub was going to be our last baby, I made it a point to be very present in every moment I could.

Margaret Sanger the founder of Planned Parenthood once said “As often as I have witnessed the miracle, held the perfect creature with its tiny hands and feet, each time I have felt as though I were entering a cathedral with prayer in my heart.”

It was during those early morning nursings, when she was very little, I would find myself in a holy place. My little apt would become a cathedral, it would be so quiet, sometimes, I could hear trains in the very distance, the moon would be our only light, beaming through the window. We were “alone”, but there was something else, someone else in that room with us. Sometimes I would imagine it was my father, whom M asked for him to watch over us not long before he died. Maybe it was my grandmother or great grandmother or even great great grandmother. But more often I would feel what, I could describe only as the Divine Feminine, The Goddess. The Mother. Some call her Mary or the Blessed One.. In our home we call her “The Lady”

The Lady would sit next to me, reminding me that this terrible, excruciating, exhaustion would soon be gone. That I would feel better soon. That I was doing, G*s work. She would Comfort me, Telling me that no, S would not just arbitrarily die, that the boys would be ok. Now I think she would remind me that the chances of my children being kidnapped from just outside their classrooms is almost nil, that E and I have broken the chain of alcoholism and addiction. With me working a strong program of recovery is a huge step towards sobriety for our children.

Unitarian Oliver Wendell Holmes (are you loving all my name dropping?) once said "The real religion of the world comes from women much more than from men - from mothers most of all, who carry the key of our souls in their bosoms." –

I am practicing my religion when I am changing diapers and or breastfeeding or holding a hurt child whose sibling had used hands instead of words. Or checking again while they are sleeping to see if they are still breathing listening to the same joke for the elvently billionth time and still laughing or Cleaning up 3 am barfs (why is it ALWAYS at 3 am?) wiping noses and tushes whether I am Climbing mount wash more. Or just letting them go ahead and color the walls what the hell right? The wall is just another medium! We like the arts in Waldorf schools and UU churches! I am worshipping when I do not yell when I want to. I am in worship when I do the dishes or cook dinner. Though I must admit that I hold true the wisdom of Phyllis Diller who said “Cleaning your house while your kids are still growing is like shoveling the walk before it stops snowing.” —And of course I offer up a sacrifice whilst smiting the very stubborn Oregon ants that keep coming back like a bad rash.

It was during that early time in S's life, that I started to collect Mary statues, I like the Madonna and child ones, I have some of mother's breastfeeding, and a few of pregnant woman. I now have several alters in my home that I have made dedicated to mothering and motherhood. They remind me of my 2 am visits with The Lady.

This is my life, my home is my sanctuary, my act of mothering is worship, and prayer and offering and yes there is sacrifice of time and personal space. But the truth is and I believe every mother would agree. This is a short, very short time in my life was just a season. And as seasons do it will pass, more would come and my children would grow and learn and hurt and heal. I believe my life as a mother is a divine calling that my work as a mother and wife was an offering

to my children, to G*d and the world...that this works, dare I say “woman's work” would matter for generations... I am honored to be a wife and mother. But I must say...I must admit look forward to the day when I can pee in peace, eat a meal in a restaurant with out chancing a toddler around or even maybe. Sleep a whole night. Oh yeah....it is very hard to write a sermon with a 3 year old. Ask me how I know.

I am going to close with a quote from someone that may surprise you:

David Oman McKay (September 8, 1873 – January 18, 1970) was the ninth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), serving from 1951 until his death. Ordained an apostle and member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1906, McKay was a general authority for nearly sixty-four years, longer than anyone else in LDS Church history. (I LOVE Wikipedia)

The noblest calling in the world is that of mother. True motherhood is the most beautiful of all arts, the greatest of all professions. She who can paint a masterpiece or who can write a book that will influence millions deserves the plaudits and admiration of mankind; but she who rears successfully a family of healthy, beautiful sons and daughters whose immortal souls will be exerting an influence throughout the ages long after paintings shall have faded, and books and statues shall have been destroyed, deserves the highest honor that man can give.-

May it be so and blessed be.