

Our Destiny in the Hands of a Baby *Fr. Dean McFalls, 12/27/07*

Thursday afternoon, taking shelter from a freezing rain in Bellingham, Washington, I waited in Wal-Mart for my dad to pick up discount meds.

After an extremely busy December in Lathrop, I felt a lot older than his 81 years. Sitting in a geriatric back-massage chair as the senior Pharmacist dispensed the drugs, I beheld a wonderful sight. There, in a huge shopping cart pushed by a woman in her seventies, sat the most beautiful baby girl.

Peering out at me with almond eyes and dark bangs cut straight across, the little creature looked like an Eskimo version of Dora. I couldn't let this one pass me by. Leaping up, I asked the silver-haired woman (who herself was Caucasian) what exactly were the origins of this miniature miracle.

“She's part Korean, part Mexican, and she's my niece's adopted baby.”

Those almond eyes kept staring up at me. Of course. With most of my parishioners from Mexico, and with the valley's Korean Catholics meeting at our church for worship and activities, I should have figured this one out.

But what I couldn't fathom was the tremendous impact that little round face had on me. Maybe it was circling through Disneyland's “Small, Small World” as a child that left a lasting imprint. Maybe it was the way I associate almond eyes and babies with a sense of spiritual mysticism. Or better yet, maybe it's the fact that, only two days before, we celebrated the birth of God-With-Us, Emmanuel. *His eyes contain the whole universe.*

On Christmas day, following Masses in the parish and in the Honor Farm, I plopped down on a comfortable chair and fell asleep. I was completely exhausted. There, in the Intensive Care Nursery at the County Hospital, a baby born premature awaited baptism. While the attending nurse finished some protocols, I conked out, feeling weaker than the child I was about to bless. I didn't even have the energy to visit little Angel, another ICN baby born far too early (at 27 weeks) to survive without medical intervention.

What I could do, in that zone between waking and sleeping, was meditate on a remarkable painting just inside the entrance to the ICN unit. Donated

by the hospital Auxiliary, it portrays a baby boy sitting on his haunches in a darkened room. Stuffed into a turquoise blue jump suit, he stares right out at you with an impish, mischievous expression. Beneath him on a kind of carpet are symbols reminiscent of Southwest Indian tribes like the Hopi and Navaho, and his round face with almond eyes reflect the same origin.

This confident-looking cherub has, in his possession, a large sphere. It resembles exactly one of those dark bowling balls with a misty pattern suggesting the movement of high altitude clouds above the earth at night.

Or maybe, just maybe, *that is* the earth. Drawing closer, I'd been amazed to see that this innocent Indian boy was in possession of planet earth, and that directly between and below his tiny hands were the Southwest United States and Mexico. From the expression on his face, he wasn't letting go.

In fact, those impish eyes seemed to say, "This world is mine. I dare you to try taking it away. I may be cute now, but test and see what happens."

As I baptized that premie girl, and saw how utterly helpless she seemed to be without medical attention, I wondered at how God Almighty, whom the universe He created cannot contain, made Himself so vulnerable as to need the nurture and the protection of a human being. I have seen many pictures of the Christ-child carried in the arms of Mary, bearing Himself the world in his hand. We know that He was born King of kings and Lord of lords...

But God's message to us this Christmas, more than ever, is how the future of our planet truly does lie in the hands of this Baby. In a culture which obsesses on exerting man-made control over the female reproductive cycle and over the life which comes from physical union in what is called "love" – in a history still marked by tragedies and great evils like December 27th's assassination of Pakistan's greatest hope for Democracy, ex-Prime Minister Bhutto – in a context of increasing discouragement and cynicism – the Christ-child appears, radiating a pristine light, scattering the darkness and warming the cold, God-forsaken corners of our existence with the song of God's glory and the Good News of Peace. Yes, He's the One staring out at us with the beautiful almond eyes, and yes, He's the One who's got the whole world in His hands. And no, He's not letting go.