

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2022

The

“Instaurare omnia in Christo”

ANGELUS

THE VOICE OF TRADITIONAL CATHOLICISM



THE ART OF FILM

Dr. William Fahey's Movie Recommendations

Gabriel Sanchez on Place, Loyalty, and Humanity
in Denis Villeneuve's *Dune* (2021)

A Snapshot of the History of Film by Helena Davis

Jonathan Wanner: Don't Judge a Book by Its Movie

Cinema and Sanctity by Pauper Peregrinus

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear Reader,



Fr. John Fullerton

District Superior of the
United States of America

As we enter the Year of Our Lord 2022, I wish you all a Happy Holy New Year. After nearly two years of anxiety, uncertainty, and hardship brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, I pray that the fallout from all its consequences will soon be behind us. The work of the Society of Saint Pius X, including publishing *The Angelus* magazine, continues despite the obstacles that have been placed in our path. Our excellent team of writers, designers, and editors are dedicated to bringing you what we think is the best traditional Catholic magazine available today. Moreover, while supply chain slowdowns have caused some delays, I am happy to report that this magazine and all of Angelus Press's publications will continue to be available in due course.

In this issue, we look at the medium of cinema from a Catholic perspective. As many of you are no doubt aware, the history of film and, by extension, television and online streaming has been fraught with abuse. Although envisioned as another means to bring human artistry to a wider audience, it did not take long for unscrupulous persons to exploit this forum to spread vice. Therefore, Catholics, particularly Catholic parents, must remain on guard against the corrupting force film too often proves to be. At the same time, however, film has been a vehicle to deliver profoundly edifying messages and create a permanent telling of some of the greatest stories ever told, from the works of Shakespeare to tales from the Bible.

While each of us must search our conscience to decide which, if any, films they wish to see, it is a topic well worth considering. Just as we should not be too hasty to condemn the entire cinematic enterprise, we should always be on guard against any artistic expression that may normalize sin. Recommendations must always be taken with a grain of salt. As we are told, we must prove all things and hold fast to that which is good.

Fr. John Fullerton
Publisher

ON OUR COVER: Iconic image of the Man in the Moon. A frame from the only surviving hand-colored print of Georges Méliès's 1902 film, *Le voyage dans la lune*. Inspired by a wide variety of sources, the film follows a group of astronomers who travel to the moon in a cannon-propelled capsule, explore the moon's surface, escape from an underground group of Selenites (lunar inhabitants), and return to Earth with a captive Selenite. *A Trip to the Moon* was an internationally popular success on its release, and was extensively pirated by other studios, especially in the United States. Its unusual length, lavish production values, innovative special effects, and emphasis on storytelling were markedly influential on other film-makers and ultimately on the development of narrative film as a whole.

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“To publish Catholic journals and place them in the hands of honest men is not enough. It is necessary to spread them as far as possible that they may be read by all, and especially by those whom Christian charity demands we should tear away from the poisonous sources of evil literature.”
—Pope St. Pius X

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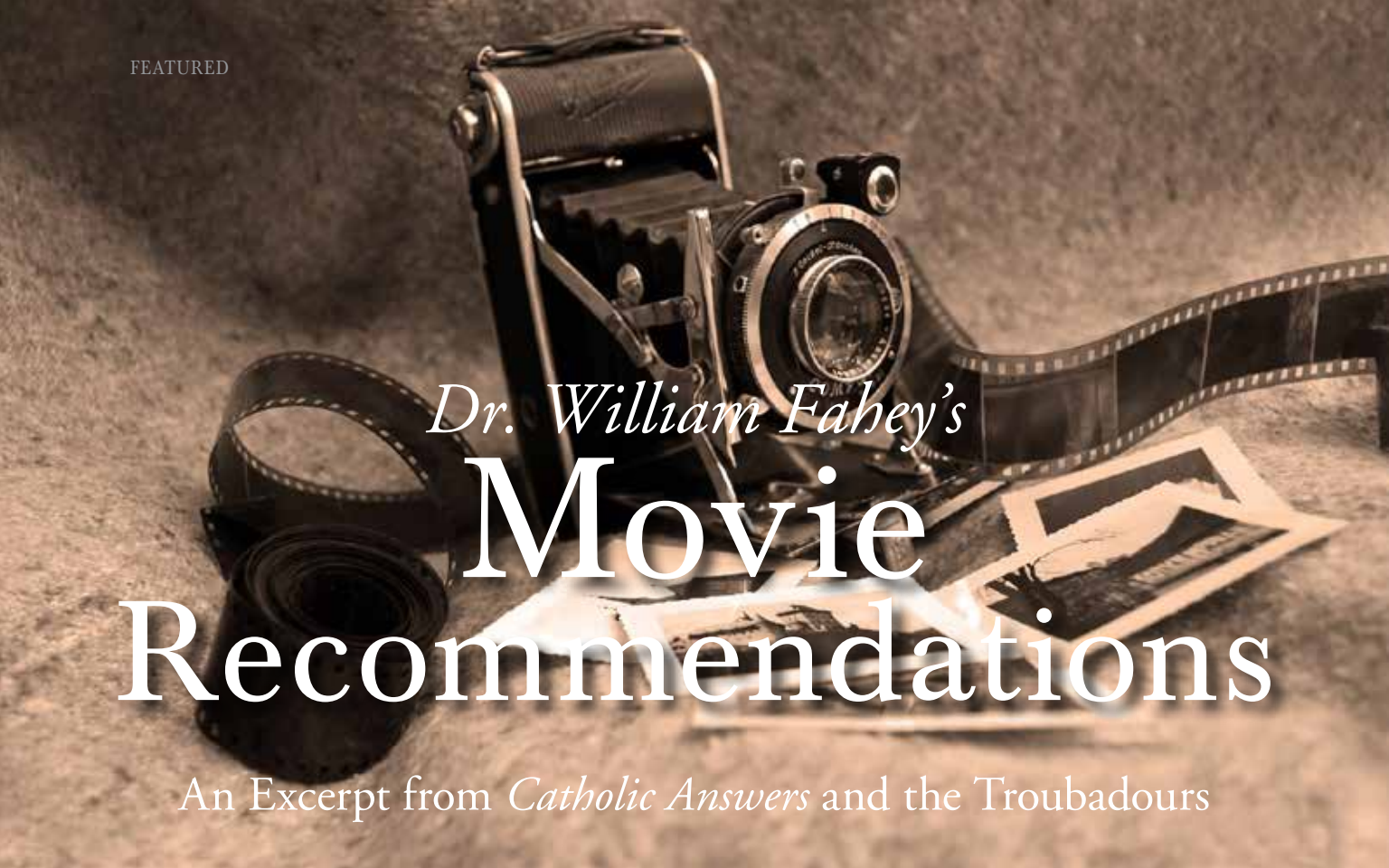
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Dr. William Fahey's
Movie
Recommendations

An Excerpt from *Catholic Answers* and the Troubadours

Dr. William Fahey

From *Catholic Answers*:

What's the technical know-how that might help a viewer evaluate and discuss movies? There are libraries filled with books on the subject and film studies programs of varying quality. But for our purpose, I suggest focusing attention in two areas to develop our capacity to perceive and not merely watch.

Watching is passive. Perception is engaged reflection. It is the leaven of conversation and a necessary ingredient in evaluation.

So, what big ideas can you hold in your mind while watching—or better, if it's good, rewatching—a movie? I call them *composition* and *linking*.

Big Idea One: Composition

Composition starts with the camera itself. While you're watching a movie, ask, "Where did the director put the camera and why? What's the position of the camera, the angle, or the focus of lens? What has he put *into* each

shot? Are there recurring angles, images, *etc.*?" Each segment of action in the boxed image you see on the screen—all that is the composition. The fancy French phrase for film composition is *mis-en-scene*, which means something like "setting the scene."

Director Frank Capra was a master of composition. Consider any scene from his movie *It's a Wonderful Life* involving a domestic moment or crowd: George Bailey having his last dinner with his father, all the scenes in Gower's pharmacy or Mr. Potter's bank, and, most famously, the last five minutes of the movie. Composition requires the careful selection of lenses and camera angles, the detailed blocking out of the movement of each actor, *etc.* The foresight and precision needed aren't obvious, and that naturalness is a sign of art's triumph.

Similarly, close-up scenes are like portraits, where lighting and subtle movement are part of the director's palette, often combined with relative silence to create dramatic effect. Con-

sider the close-ups on Jimmy Stewart in any pivotal moment in the movie, the finest being his slow awakening to horror in front of Martini's (now Nick's) Bar. In this and other scenes, Capra brought in aspects of the *film noir* (crime movies) to create visual masterpieces that rival Baroque painters.

Big Idea Two: Linking

The second big idea to be aware of is something I'm calling *linking*. Visually, one of the most powerful "linkings" goes by another French word, *montage*. But I think the montage is part of a deeper human desire to see patterns. Here ask yourself, "What does the director layer upon the scene, such as background sound, especially the music? How does he move from one scene to the next? Did he edit shot to shot well? Is there continuity between scenes? Are the actors paired well?"

Again, let's consider *It's a Wonderful Life*. In the less than seven minutes that make up the "run on the bank" scene there are fifty-six separate shots constructed from hours of footage, filmed from carefully blocked angles under precise rehearsals with at least three dozen actors, all crafted together without a flaw. The emotional impact comes from the sustained movement of the drama, combined with arresting moments of focus and the constant linking of dramatic scenes, emotions, and sounds. Watch it again.

...Read the rest in *Catholic Answers* November-December 2021 edition!

A list of movies recommended by Dr. Fahey to try these ideas out on, from one of 2020's Troubadours conferences:

1. **Movies with an oriental detective which raise questions about occidental stupidity:** *Charlie Chan at Treasure Island* (1939) and *Thank You, Mr. Moto* (1937)
2. **Movies about growing up under the influence of a noble scoundrel:** *Treasure Island* (1950) and *True Grit* (2010)
3. **Movies for those who think they understand falling in love:** *I Know Where I'm Going* (1945) and *The Quiet Man* (1952)
4. **Movies for those who think leadership is about glory and being "on top" of the**

world: *Twelve O'Clock High* (1949) and *High Noon* (1952)

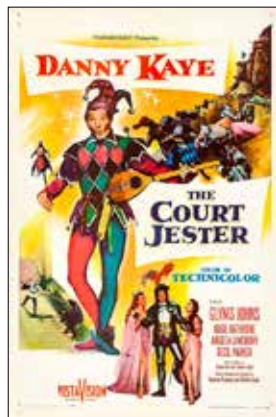
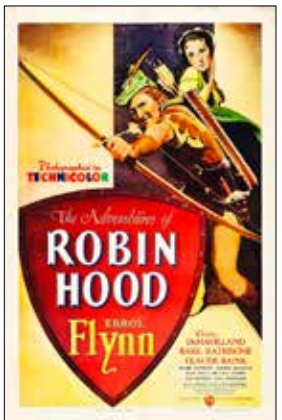
5. **Movies which are rollicking:** *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1937 only) and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1939)
6. **Movies which are called comedies but are in fact satire:** *Duck Soup* (1933) and *The Court Jester* (1955)
7. **Movies about the burden and strength of solitude:** *The Browning Version* (1951 only) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1960)
8. **Movies about treachery, plots, and spies—that is to say, movies about human nature:** *The 39 Steps* (1935) and *Went the Day Well?* (1942)
9. **Movies about empire building—which are really about more important things:** *Gunga Din* (1939) and *Breaker Morant* (1980)
10. **Movies about the beautiful future that technology will give us:** *Blade Runner* (1982) and *The Matrix* (1999)
11. **Movies about Loss and Redemption:** *Ben Hur* (1959) and *Manchester by the Sea* (2016)
12. **Movies about aging with dignity and the dignity of age:** *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) and *The Queen* (2006)

The Best Movie: In the end, I must write of one.

The one. It is the stand alone *one and only*, which sweeps in all categories and forever will remain unassailable in its place of high achievement in Western Civilization as *the* movie that best exemplifies the art of film: *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946).

The Troubadours— Christopher Check, Dale Ahlquist, William Fahey, Daniel Kerr, and Joseph Pearce—meet monthly, live, to converse about faith and culture. Join their conversations by heading to the Troubadours page at the St. Martin's Academy website.





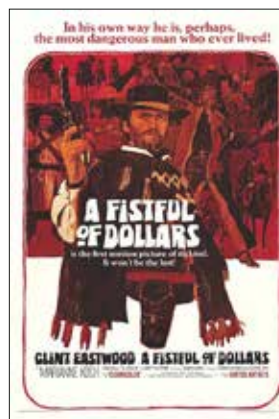
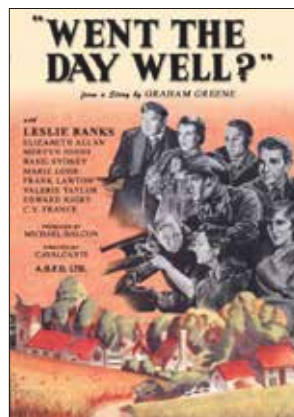
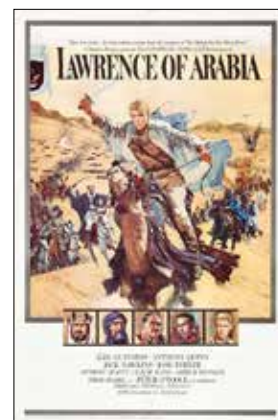
Blade Runner is a 1982 science fiction film directed by Ridley Scott. Starring Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, and Edward James Olmos, it is an adaptation of Philip K. Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* The film is set in a dystopian future Los Angeles of 2019, in which synthetic humans known as replicants are bio-engineered by the powerful Tyrell Corporation to work on space colonies. When a fugitive group of advanced replicants led by Roy Batty (Hauer) escapes back to Earth, burnt-out cop Rick Deckard (Ford) reluctantly agrees to hunt them down.

Blade Runner initially underperformed in North American theaters and polarized critics. It later became an acclaimed cult film regarded as one of the all-time best science fiction films.

It's a Wonderful Life is a 1946 film produced and directed by Frank Capra, based on the short story *The Greatest Gift*, which Philip Van Doren Stern self-published in 1943 and is in turn loosely based on the 1843 Charles Dickens novella, *A Christmas Carol*. The film stars James Stewart as George Bailey, a man who has given up his personal dreams in order to help others in his community, and whose thoughts of suicide on Christmas Eve brings about the intervention of his guardian angel, who shows George how he has touched the lives of others and how different life would be for his wife, Mary, and his community of Bedford Falls if he had not been born.

Although *It's a Wonderful Life* initially received mixed reviews and was unsuccessful at the box office, it became a classic Christmas film after it was put into the public domain, which allowed it to be broadcast without licensing or royalty fees.

It's a Wonderful Life is considered one of the greatest films of all time. It was nominated for five Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and has been recognized by the American Film Institute as one of the 100 best American films ever made. It was No. 11 on the American Film Institute's 1998 greatest movie list, No. 20 on its 2007 greatest movie list, and No. 1 on its list of the most inspirational American films of all time. Capra revealed that it was his favorite among the films he directed and that he screened it for his family every Christmas season. It was one of Stewart's favorite films. In 1990, the film was designated as "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant" and added to the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress.





Place, Loyalty, and Humanity in Denis Villeneuve's *Dune*

Gabriel S. Sanchez, J.D.

“My planet Arrakis is so beautiful when the sun is low. . .”

These words, spoken by Chani (Zendaya), open Denis Villeneuve’s cinematic interpretation of Frank Herbert’s groundbreaking 1965 novel *Dune*. Chani, a member of the Fremen people who inhabit the desert planet of Arrakis, is given few lines, but her first may be the most important. For whatever *Dune* is as a piece of world-building science fiction which, in the hands of its original author and his progeny, would spawn numerous sequels expanding upon, and perhaps in some instances distorting, the original tale of betrayal, hope, and destiny, it is also a story about place. In the eyes of the Imperium which rules the “known galaxy,” Arrakis is a land to be exploited for spice, the substance that makes interstellar travel possible; it is not a destination to visit, let alone inhabit. For the Fremen, whose culture is glimpsed upon throughout the

film, it is home, one which they will fight and die to maintain in the face of a brutish colonial mindset.

To speak of *Dune*, either as film or a series, is to invite controversy. For decades, the original novel was deemed “unfilmable” due to its scope, much in the way many thought J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* could never be brought to the big screen. Without commenting on the quality of Peter Jackson’s adaptation of the latter, its ambition and execution no doubt contributed to a belief that even Herbert’s work could be reproduced cinematically. An earlier 1984 attempt helmed by writer/director David Lynch has been universally panned and a TV series based on the novel, though received more favorably, never captured the public imagination. Villeneuve, who has a demonstrated eye for epic storytelling with movies such as *Arrival* and *Blade Runner 2049*, has been vested with bringing Herbert’s story to life, albeit over the course of two installments. Those coming into

the movie “cold,” that is having not read the novel, will likely be puzzled by what appears to be a slow-burn movie with a tremendous cliffhanger. Why, for instance, spend nearly three hours setting the stage when the norm for big-budget productions is to close with an epic battle fueled by explosions, stunt work, and an abundance of CGI? Villeneuve’s *Dune*, much like its source material, is much more than a presentation of action; it is an exploration of a world, or rather worlds, creatively exotic from what we know now and yet shockingly familiar.

Arrakis rests as the center of the film, but its main protagonist is Paul (Timothée Chalamet), heir to House Atreides, which occupies the oceanic planet of Caladan. Overseen by the benevolent but perceptive Duke Leto (Oscar Isaac), House Atreides is “gifted” Arrakis by the Emperor Shaddam Corrino IV for the purposes of harvesting spice. Its prior exploiters, House Harkonnen, are aggrieved by this turn of events, though not for long. In the political landscape of *Dune*, which has more in common with the classical-to-medieval age of Western human history than the present day, rivalries between houses and with the emperor himself dictate decision making. As Duke Leto quickly devises, the edict to send House Atreides to Arrakis is to set in motion its downfall. What both the Emperor and House Harkonnen remain unaware of is how their plans to end House Atreides on Arrakis will provide Paul the opportunity to fulfill his messianic future for the Fremen people and the wider galaxy.

It is here that a few warnings should be issued. First, like any assessment of an artistic work, spoilers are lurking below. Second, while not disconnected with human history, *Dune* is set more than 20,000 years in the future where human civilization on Earth has ceased to exist and humans now occupy a range of planets throughout the galaxy. Its system of dating, “Before Guild” and “After Guild,” is only touched upon faintly in the movie, but that

The themes of *Dune* are many, but the one that stands out the most is the sense of place in a galactic environment far broader than anything we currently know.

alone should clue one in that like its politics, *Dune*’s economics call back to an earlier era on our own timeline. Third, while penetrated with spirituality, *Dune*’s religiosity is an intentional chimera developed over the course of millennia. It lurks in the background of many scenes and the intentions of its characters but remains underexplored cinematically thus far. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are its primary sources, though other influences are detectable. Those inclined toward a certain type of “purism” in their poetry and prose may be offset by this, but there is no evading the seriousness Herbert and his adapters invested in religious truth. Unlike much contemporary science fiction, the *Dune* universe is not atheistic, mechanical, and scientifically sanitized, but rather permeated by a sense of awe that repeatedly opens new questions about humanity and its place in the wider universe.

Paul, as we quickly learn, is no ordinary boy, but rather the son of Duke Leto and his concubine, Lady Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson), who herself is part of a mystical sisterhood known as the Bene Gesserit. As the Bene Gesserit training leads to extraordinary abilities, including the power to command others (“the voice”) and even choose the sex of one’s child, Lady Jessica was instructed to only have girls, a command which she disobeyed out of love and loyalty toward Duke Leto. In her attempt to train Paul in the ways of the Bene Gesserit, there is a mixture of pride and frustration brought to light, for in hoping Paul grows into the man she perceives he will become, Lady Jessica betrays her own roots. Paul himself is often left confused by what he has been reared to be, even going so far as to call himself a “freak” in a moment of despair. He knows as Duke Leto’s son he is expected one day to rule House Atreides, but his recurrent dreams, presented sporadically throughout the film, point toward another path.

Before House Atreides arrives in force on Arrakis, *Dune* delves into the role love and loy-

alty have to the story. While Lady Jessica at times “walks in shadows” as Duke Leto states, two of the Duke’s most formidable soldiers, Duncan Idaho (Jason Momoa) and Gurney Halleck (Josh Brolin), enter the frame. Both demonstrate deep, if not tough, love for Paul. They warn him of the dangers that await them all on Arrakis, particularly from the Harkonnen who will eventually take their revenge for losing out on the riches the planet’s spice crop provides. Paul shifts from heeding their advice to expressing annoyance, particularly at being unable to accompany Idaho with the advance team on Arrakis. It is here that we learn Duke Leto’s primary goal is not to exploit Arrakis for its resource while oppressing the Fremen people, but rather to forge an alliance with the Fremen to secure the future of House Atreides against the jealousy of the Emperor and the vengeance of House Harkonnen.

Duke Leto’s intentions, though noble, are unrealized in time. A visit by the Fremen leader Stilgar (Javier Bardem) yields an uneasy respect between the two, but soon thereafter the Harkonnen, backed by the Emperor’s Spartan-like warriors, the Sardaukar, make their move on the planet. Betrayed by his own house physician, Duke Leto is disabled; Paul and Lady Jes-

sica are taken captive by the Harkonnen; and House Atreides is ravaged by a massive siege. Idaho and Halleck, along with the Atreides army, fight valiantly, refusing to retreat even in the face of overwhelming odds, but defeat follows nonetheless. Idaho, by sheer force of will, manages to evade capture in order to search for Paul and Lady Jessica, but the arrival of Vladimir Harkonnen (Stellan Skarsgard), the envious head of House Harkonnen, means the death of Duke Leto and the fall of House Atreides.

It is at this point in the film where Arrakis, presented at times as an unforgiving hellish landscape populated with giant sandworms which are indiscriminate in what (or who) they consume, is presented in a fresher light. While Paul and Idaho furnish background information on the nature of the planet and how the Fremen people have adapted to it earlier in the movie, Paul and Lady Jessica’s escape from the Harkonnen leaves them no choice but to make the Fremen’s ways their own. Stillsuits, designed by the Fremen to retain and recycle bodily moisture amidst Arrakis’s arid environment, are worn. The Fremen’s unique, almost dance-like, shifting walk which is intended to avoid the rhythmic sound of footsteps that could attract the aforementioned worms is adopted.

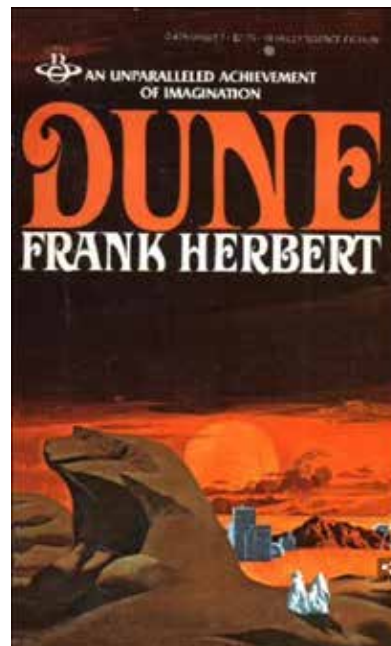


And Paul's visions become increasingly more focused on the Fremen and his future with their culture.

The Fremen, too, take an interest in Paul and Lady Jessica as they make their way across the desert. Hunted by the Sardaukar, the Fremen opt to assist rather than abandon them to another oppressive force. Idaho, who has already established good ties with the Fremen, returns briefly to sacrifice his life for Paul, the boy he recognizes as the new duke of House Atreides. Utilizing their environment, the Fremen rise up out of the sands of Arrakis to do battle with the Sardaukar. One of their clandestine members, Liet-Kynes (Sharon Duncan-Brewster), even leads a sandworm to swallow her and the Sardaukar warriors rather than be taken captive or worse. Eventually the Fremen confront Paul and Lady Jessica, leading to the film's climactic battle between Paul and a Fremen warrior in a ritual duel to the death. Although Lady Jessica beseeches the Fremen to help them return to Caladan, Paul embraces Arrakis as his new home world, his place of being, and joins the Fremen.

As noted, the themes of *Dune* are many, but the one that stands out the most is the sense of place in a galactic environment far broader than anything we currently know. To outsiders, Arrakis is not a land to be loved, but a resource to be mined with no care given to its inhabitants. It is a story with parallels both current and old. The Middle East, with its abundant oil reserves, makes for an easy comparison, but so, too, does the United States with its reservoir of resources serving as grounds to dislocate and murder Native Americans. And though colonization is not in itself an intrinsic evil, particularly where it has intentional civilizing effects, excuses and ignorance often appear to justify rampant cruelty. Paul, now left without a father and his political rule in jeopardy, could have easily forsaken Arrakis at the end; instead he sees his father's mission, though derailed, as his own.

While it remains to be seen if the history of the Fremen will be examined in the next *Dune* film, it is not speaking out of turn to state that they did not come to Arrakis by choice but out of persecution for their religious beliefs. Were



it not for the commercial value of spice, they would have remained an afterthought to the Imperium. Instead, they are victims. At no point in *Dune* do they seek to abandon Arrakis nor shun it. It is their home. It defines them. This is why they resist vehemently any attempt for outsiders to occupy its lands or harvest spice which, for the Fremen, possesses a spiritual rather than economic quality. At the same time, the Fremen demonstrate a surprising openness to those who will adopt their ways, particularly Paul. Paul's messianic status among the Fremen is yet to be shown, only hinted at. Even so, the Fremen are not inherently reactionary; they are protective.

Some Catholics may be tempted to criticize *Dune* for superficial reasons. The Fremen culture as it is presented in both the film and the book draws heavily on nomadic peoples of the Middle East such as the Bedouins, who largely practice Sunni Islam. Any direct mention of God is limited to a single expression by Gurney Halleck, though he can also be seen reading from a book that contains an obscure German prayer from the early Lutheran writer Johann Arndt: "Oh have mercy on me. I recognize I am nothing without Thee. I am nothing but darkness and error, nothing but rotten carrion and the food of worms. I am an unclean vessel, a child of scorn, and eternal damnation."

Lutheran or not, the fact this prayer has never been translated into English and is not

even included in most of Arndt's collected works, points to the degree of detail Villeneuve put into his cinematic epic. It would be overplaying matters to see this prayer as some cryptic attempt to infuse *Dune* with Protestantism over and against Catholicism. If anything, it is a powerful reminder of how religion, particularly the Christian religion, continues to shape the outlook of the humans who inhabit the *Dune* universe which, as discussed, is intended to be a continuation of our own. The future of humanity, at least as envisioned by Herbert and now available on screen, is not another stale retelling of the "triumph of reason" or the unqualified gifts of technology such as artificial intelligence



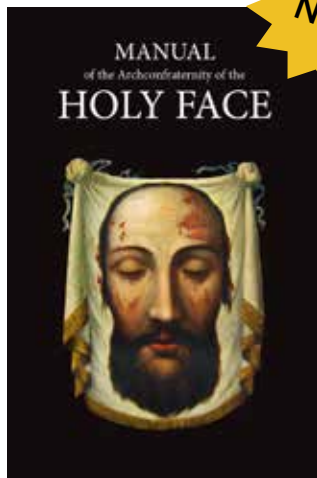
and super computers, but one of exploration, struggle, and wonder.

The anti-technological bent of *Dune* is purposeful. It may never be mentioned on film, but the one-time ubiquity of artificial intelligence in the *Dune* universe leads to a galaxy-wide revolt 10,000 years before the movie occurs. And out of this revolt came a maxim to guide all: "Man may not be replaced." This is why, for instance, the Bene Gesserit developed seemingly "super-human" skills over thousands of years or why the houses of the *Dune* universe employ persons known as Mentats, who functionally serve as human computers and are able to make complex calculations in seconds. Even if it is not possible for this and subsequent *Dune* movies to delve into this rich history which Herbert and others forged for decades, its presence onscreen is undeniable.

The idea of deep space exploration, moving off planet, or even contemplating the theological implications of a wider universe may be anathema to some, but that should not detract from the artistic scope and visionary precision of *Dune*. The massive scale of the *Dune* universe which Herbert worked tirelessly to present is captured almost perfectly and its casting is arguably flawless. Hans Zimmer, who has received numerous awards for his film scores, delivers a perfect musical backdrop to the film, which included Zimmer devising some of his own instruments to give the movie's sound an exotic feel.

The morality of *Dune* is not always easy to handle, but that is true of all human history. Brutality is juxtaposed with mercy, hatred with love, and despair with hope. Imperial politics provide little room for empathy, but this dark and cynical space is still susceptible to light and optimism. There are also moments which should reinvigorate the power of loyalty without falling into the temptation of tribalism. And through it all there is a penetrating message about place, our world, and where we fit into it. We never have the opportunity to choose when we are born or often where we will live. We cannot pick our neighbors but we can hold to the beauty of what surrounds us.

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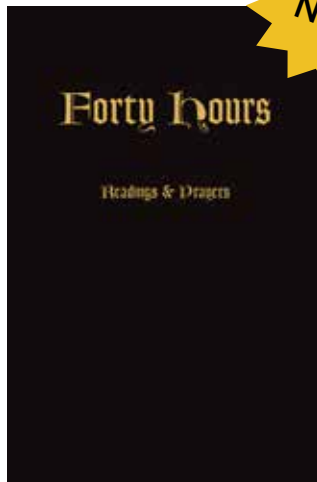
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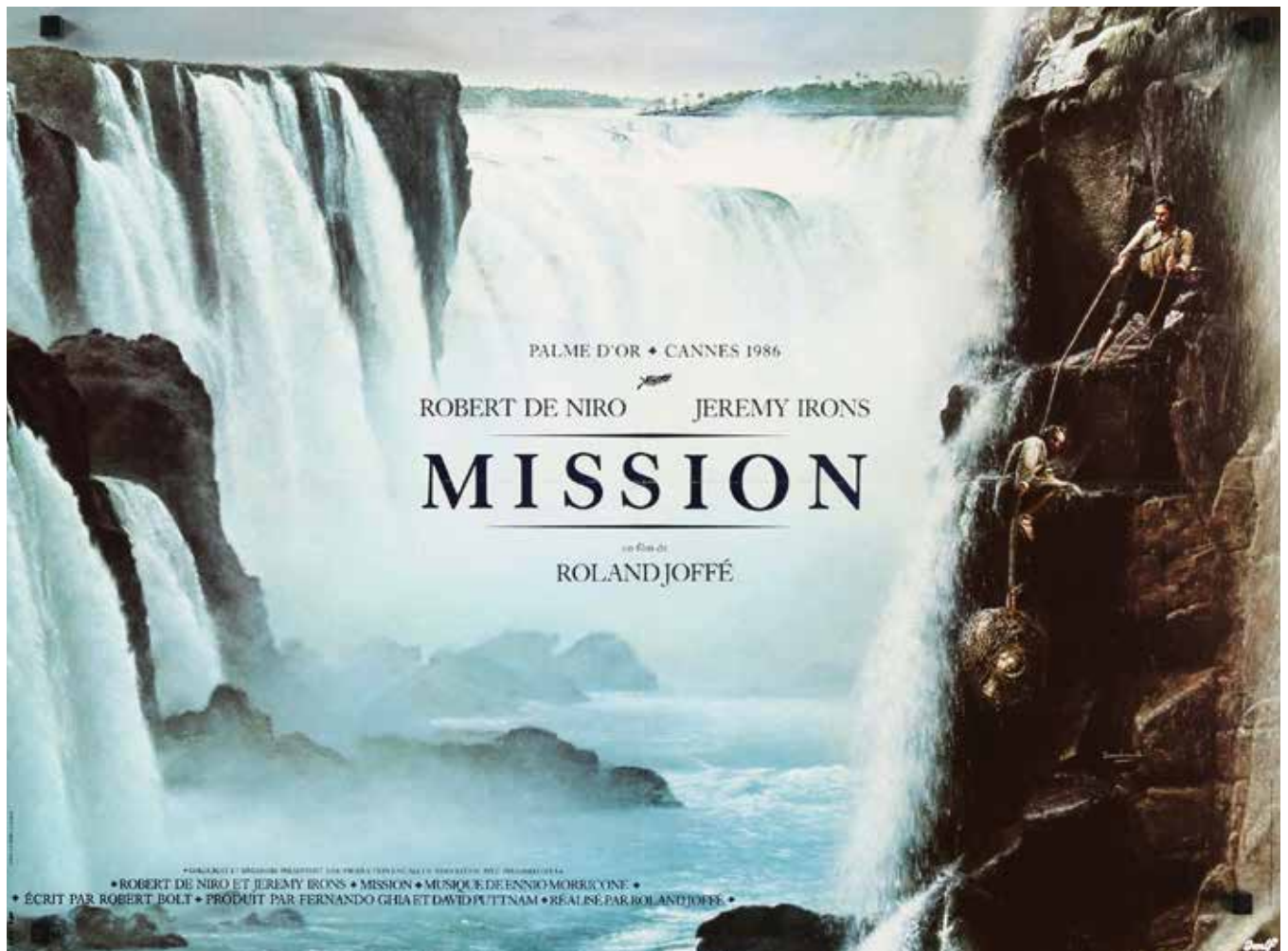


The Mission is a 1986 British period drama film directed by Roland Joffé and written by Robert Bolt.

Jesuit priest Fr. Gabriel (Robert De Niro) enters the Guarani lands in South America with the purpose of bringing the natives into the Church. He soon builds a mission, where he is joined by Rodrigo Mendoza, a reformed slave trader seeking redemption. When a treaty transfers the land from Spain to Portugal, the Portuguese government wants to capture the natives for slave labor. Mendoza and Gabriel resolve to defend the mission, but disagree on how to accomplish the task.

It won the Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or and the Academy Award for Best Cinematography. It was number one on the *Church Times*' Top 50 Religious Films list. It is also one of 15 films listed in the category "Religion" on the Vatican film list.

The Mission is based on events surrounding the Treaty of Madrid in 1750, in which Spain ceded part of Jesuit Paraguay to Portugal. A significant subtext is the impending suppression of the Jesuits. The film's climax is the Guarani War of 1754–1756, during which historical Guarani defended their homes against Spanish-Portuguese forces implementing the Treaty of Madrid.





A Snapshot of the History of Film

Helena Davis

Film has an ability to enthrall and enchant like no other medium. It can capture the imagination in a way entirely different from books and painting. Even now that going to the movie theatre has become a dying pastime, film still captivates us. Movies and books are written about the “silver screen,” the golden age of Hollywood, the lives of past film stars and film makers. “Film Studies” has become a popular college major (and a breeding ground for pretention). Even as the quality of our films continues to rapidly decline, the mystique and enchantment of film remain.

And yet, despite our continued cultural fascination with film, there is a tendency to think of film purely as entertainment, something not to be taken seriously. This is something that the medium has struggled with since its beginning. But when we increasingly turn to film—arguably more than any other medium—to process questions of our national identity, we can see its extraordinary myth-making potential.

“An Invention Without a Future” —The Early Era of Film

Film did not always have the stature it enjoys today. When the pioneering Lumiere brothers gave a screening of one of their short films in the 1890s, one of the brothers remarked that film was “an invention without a future,” simply an amusing invention, but that was all.

Even as the film industry began to grow rapidly, it wasn’t taken very seriously. Most considered film a cheap form of entertainment, a fad whose moment would pass quickly. Actors and actresses who pursued roles in film rather than the stage were said to be throwing their careers away. Early feminists even viewed theatre houses as places of vice and danger, some going so far as to propose that a policeman needed to be posted outside in case of undesirable characters causing trouble.

One of the early breakthroughs in film came at the hands of director David Wark Griffith. His 1915 film, *Birth of a Nation*, enthralled audi-

ences, including Woodrow Wilson, who hosted a showing at the White House. D. W. Griffith developed some of the most innovative and influential film techniques, some of which are still being used to this day. For decades, film directors looked to *Birth of a Nation* for stylistic inspiration. A romanticized portrayal of the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, the film's content is overtly racist. Yet its artistry is unquestionable. Even today, over a hundred years later, the story remains compelling, and one is moved against one's will. The success of *Birth of a Nation*—which, at three hours long, still managed to hold the audience captive—helped catapult the film industry into something that people began to take seriously.

The inability for film to convey sound gave rise to a very particular style, both in comedic and serious films. Many modern viewers would call them overdramatic. The comedies of this era rely on expressiveness of face and gesture, as well as slapstick situations that require no words. Likewise, the more serious films also rely on expressive faces: the long shot close-ups of Lillian Gish's face in *Birth of a Nation* convey more than words.

The early film industry really hit its stride with the rise of the silent comedy. When we think of silent film, most of us think of Charlie Chaplin—and with good reason, too. Chaplin used the silent film medium to its full advantage for comedic effect. His movies rely on his incredibly expressive face. The big, sad eyes of his character, the Tramp, gazing at us from the screen heighten the ridiculousness of whatever situation he finds himself in. Another star of similar style, Buster Keaton, uses silent film in much the same way. While Keaton's films rely more on the slapstick than Chaplin's, his ability to look mild and unassuming in the most ridiculous circumstances is what brings the laughs. The silent medium is what allows this singular expressiveness. Nothing since the advent of the "talkie" has conveyed comedy the way the well-timed gaze of Keaton or Chaplin did.

"You Ain't Heard Nothing Yet" —Rise of the Talkies

Of course, talking films revolutionized film industry. *The Jazz Singer*, released in 1927, is the story of a Jewish boy torn between his traditional roots and his desire to become a star. It is generally considered the first talking film.

While the film itself has all but been forgotten, the effect it had changed movie history. Al Johnson's "Wait a minute. . . wait a minute! You ain't heard nothing yet" following a song he sings was magical.

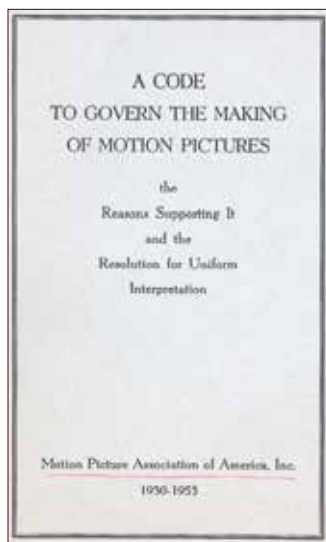
In comedy, the coming of sound to film shifted much of the focus away from slapstick humor and the comedy of the mime to witty dialogue. The romantic screwball comedy replaced Chaplin's humorous and poignant movies. These films, while they often still contained some of the slapstick aspects of early films, relied heavily on back-and-forth banter of the protagonists—films such as *Philadelphia Story*, *Bringing Up Baby*, and *Arsenic and Old Lace*.

Sound also gave rise to a series of musical comedies. These were the years when Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers ruled the screen, churning out hits like *Top Hat* and *Shall We Dance?* As the title of the last film suggests, the focus of these movies was not so much the singing (as it would become in the musicals of the 1950s), although they contain music by some of the great song writers of their time, but dance, the tapping of their shoes to the rhythms, audible for the first time.

This also allowed for the first "crossovers," with popular musicians like Bing Crosby starring in films like *Holiday Inn* and *Going My Way*. The addition of these stars lent even greater popularity to film as a medium.

"A Jewish-Owned Business Selling Roman Catholic Theology to Protestant America" —The Hays Code Era

As movies became more and more popular, and directors became emboldened, the restrictions placed by social censure on what could and could not be shown in a film weakened. This closely followed society's descent into the libertine attitudes of the 1920s and early 1930s. Films began to portray content that would shock even today's audience. Often, this was done in the name of art and free expression; usually, though, producers were more interested in driving up profit through rank sensationalism. While censorship did exist, it was largely relegated to local authorities and not standard across the industry. This made film production difficult: what might be allowed in New York might not be allowed in, say, Dallas. Different "cuts" of the same film had to be created for different



parts of the country, a tedious and expensive process.

This need for standardization combined with the growing concern of many religious and political leaders about what was being shown to America's audiences, as well as several high-profile Hollywood scandals, created a broad movement demanding

greater censorship. Finally, in 1930, the Motion Picture Production Code—what became known as the “Hays Code” after Will H. Hays, the head of the Production Code Administration at the time—was adopted by movie theatres in Hollywood. (Although the Hays Code was officially adopted in 1930, it was not widely enforced until 1934.) The code laid out a set of rules that motion pictures were to follow to ensure wholesomeness and quality, stating: “If motion pictures present stories that will affect lives for the better, they can become the most powerful force for the improvement of mankind.” Included in the code were strictures saying, “no picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.” The code also forbade such specific things as “brutal killings [which] are not to be presented in detail.” And stipulated that “the sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing.”

If the code reads like a reiteration of Catholic moral teaching, that's because it was! While the Code was commonly associated with Hays, the actual author of the code was Father Daniel Lord, a Jesuit priest and teacher. Someone once jokingly described the Hollywood of the Code era as “a Jewish-owned business selling Roman Catholic theology to Protestant America.” They were not entirely wrong.

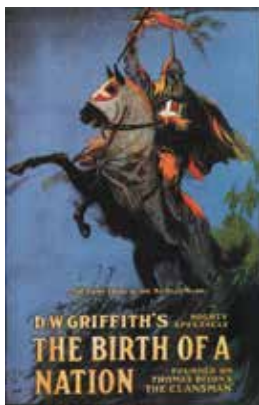
The greatest criticism of the Code has been that it stifled artistic freedom. However, Joseph Breen, the Catholic who took over the Produc-

tion Code Administration from Hays in 1934 and is responsible for the widespread implementation of the code, loved movies. He saw his role as ensuring that the quality of film was protected by preventing the degrading and immoral from dragging it down. A survey of the films from that period, many considered some of the greatest ever made, gives lie to the claim that artistry suffered under the code. In fact, *Casablanca* would not contain its painfully beautiful ending were it not for the Code, which forbade the glorification of illicit romances. Likewise, Hitchcock's masterpiece of Noir cinema, *Rebecca*, transformed the plot from a lurid tale of adultery and murder (as in the original novel by Daphne du Maurier) to the story of an honorable man caught up in terrible circumstances.

It must be remembered that the code was never law. It was a voluntary self-censoring by the theatres themselves at the request of the public, which still held to its deep-seated moral principles. Once those principles began to crumble in the 1960s, the code crumbled with it. While many heralded this as an opportunity for greater artistic creativity, in retrospect, it mostly served to cheapen film. Studios took the opportunity to capitalize on lurid sensation in film, particularly through violence and the sexual exploitation of female characters. It is particularly telling that what is commonly considered to be “Golden Age” of Hollywood came to an end as the Code did.

The years during and immediately following the Second World War saw the rise of a genre of movie that produced some of the greatest films ever made: film noir. It is a genre wholly American—an ode to our national identity, portraying a rugged individual at odds with society, and likely spoke to a generation of men lost after the horrors of war. The hero must find his way in the world, defeat his enemy, and win the girl. Noir's popularity and influence are profoundly durable, as evidenced by the Neo-Noir movement of the 1970s. Even sci-fi films, such as the 1980s film *Blade Runner*, have incorporated noir themes with great success.

Musicals also rose in popularity during this time. Partially this had to do with the advent of technicolor, which was well suited to the spectacle of the musical genre with its elaborate song and dance routines. *Singing in the Rain*, a film about the shift from silent pictures to “talkies,” as well as *Meet Me in St. Louis*, which chronicles

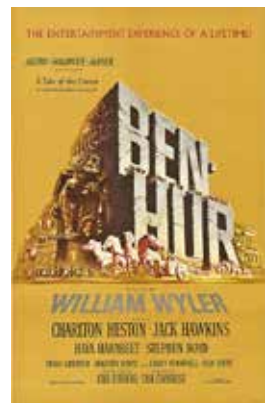
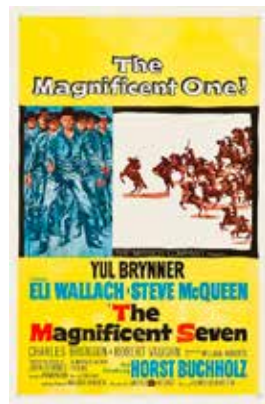


the strain between the desire for adventure and the return to the hometown, are some of the most famous.

This American tension between individual and community plays a role in nearly every film genre of this period. Noir films such as *Out of the Past*, musicals such as *The Wizard of Oz*, and Westerns, such as *The Magnificent Seven* and *High Noon* all contain this theme.

No film director typified this constant tension quite so well as Frank Capra and no film of his typifies it so well as *It's a Wonderful*

Life. *It's a Wonderful Life* is the story of a man, George Bailey (played by Jimmy Stewart) who declares: "I'm shaking the dust of this crummy little town off my feet and I'm gonna' see the world!" Instead, he stays in the town, and realizes that the impact he has there is greater than any he could have dreamed of making in the outside world.



Spectacle and Realism –Film in the 1950s

During the 1950s, several factors arose to change the scene in Hollywood. One was the advent of the at-home television set. Privately owned TVs hastened the decline of movie theatres, which began in the mid-1940s. In an effort to compete with television, movie directors produced colorful films of epic length and scope like *Ben Hur* and *The Ten Commandments* starring Charlton Heston. These films had his-

torical themes, generally Christian, with elaborate sets and costuming. Watching these movies now brings home how much film has lost with the widespread use of CGI. The chariot race in *Ben Hur* is unmatched by anything that could be created by a computer.

In contrast with the glamor of epic films such as these, the 1950s also saw the rise of a genre of film known as Naturalism, a relative of the noir genre, and the precursor in many ways to the gritty films of the 1970s. Probably the greatest American naturalist film is *On the*

Waterfront starring Marlon Brando—the story of the crime, racketeering, and union corruption among New York dock workers. Like *The Godfather*, which Brando would go on to star in years later, *On the Waterfront* also portrays a tension between sin and faith, between the violence and criminality of the dock gangs and the Catholic Church.

As the 1950s moved into the early 1960s, the movie scene saw the rise of a new (and unusual) genre—art house film. These were often independent, and generally aimed at a less pop-culture audience. This was influenced in a large part by the influx of foreign film directors onto the scene. The Italian auteur Michaelangelo Antonini is among the best known, having risen to fame thanks to his *L'Avventura* trilogy, films which grapple with themes like doomed love, and the ennui of modern life. Likewise, the Swedish art house director Ingmar Bergman's 1957 movie *The Seventh Seal* remains a classic to this day.

“They’re Young. They’re in Love. They Kill People.” —The 1960s and the End of the Hays Code

As the 1950s wound to a close another technique was turned to in order to draw audiences: the gradual disregard for the Hays code and the rise of more mature lurid material in films. As attendance at the movies continued to drop, and TV continued to rise in popularity, increasing sensationalism, both violent and sexual, was one way to draw people to the films.

One of the greatest films of the era, but one that also typifies the loosening moral code, is Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde*. This film, which led the way for a wave of great gangster films, is a dramatized version of the story of Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker, the famous gangster-lovers of the Great Depression. The film broke many of the restrictions on sexual and violent material in films, and was advertised with the tagline, “They’re young. They’re in love. They kill people.” The closing scene, aside from being considered one of the most violent death scenes in film history, especially for that time, also leaves one with no doubt where our sympathies ought to lie: with the slain lovers.

Unsurprisingly, the increased liberalism of film led to a dissolution of the role that women had experienced in earlier films. Back then,

lighting, the use of camera angles, and the choice of music had all converged to give the heroine an almost exalted status. The rank objectification of women found in many films of the Sixties and Seventies, and the way they are treated as sexual objects by the heroes of these films makes the tough-talking men of the noir films seem like Prince Charming. Sean Connery's *James Bond* films are a particularly extreme example of this trend, where women seldom serve any other function than to look pretty in as little clothing as would be allowed on screen, and so to be aggressively wooed and seduced by Bond.

Another factor which no doubt contributed to the increasing violence of the films of this era was the Vietnam War. The huge opposition to the war—fueled, in part, by the public's huge exposure to the war via television—led to a number of films such as *the Deer Hunter* and *Taxi Driver*: dark, devastating reflections on loss and madness. While the war films of the Forties and Fifties generally focused on patriotism and the nobility of fighting for a just cause, the war films of the Sixties and Seventies focus more on the horrors of war, its shattering effect on individuals and families. These films can border on the nihilistic—or, in the case of *Apocalypse Now*, a rendition of Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* set during the Vietnam War, dive right into it.

Equally dark were the series of crime films of this era. Some of the finest gangster films ever made were produced during the 1970s, following the success of the 1967 *Bonny and Clyde*. Most notable among these films is, of course, *The Godfather*. On the surface it is a story of a crime family during the height of Mafia power in New York city. However, it is also a riveting portrayal of the consequences of sin, both on the individual who freely chooses it, and on all those around him.

“A Long Time Ago in a Galaxy Far, Far Away. . .” —The 1980s and the Rise of the Block- buster

During the late 1970s, violence replaced sex as the predominant sensationalist tactic to draw people to the movies; by this time people had gotten used to the sexual content in films, after the overload of the late 1960s and the 1970s. A large part of this increase of violence was



Top: Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty in *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). Bottom: Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher and Harrison Ford in *Star Wars* (1977).

also due to the increased sophistication of special effects, which could make extremely gory scenes more convincing. The rise of special effects made movies such as Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* and George Lucas's *Star Wars* trilogy possible, films which changed the trajectory of film permanently by ushering in an era of big blockbuster franchise films and cementing one of the era's most popular genres: science fiction.

No science fiction film made in this era, or since, rival's Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, starring Harrison Ford as a policeman who hunts down rogue androids. As we said, *Blade Runner* is the film noir done again, this time in a future Los Angeles gleaming with neon light. Instead of Humphrey Bogart there is Harrison Ford. Instead of Lauren Bacall there is a beautiful "replicant," unaware that she is not human. Yet the noir themes are all there: the rugged individual at odds with society; the dark, threaten-

ing city, hinting at a dark, threatening past for the hero; the femme fatale: beautiful, dangerous, and doomed.

Harrison Ford got his big break playing Han Solo in George Lucas's *Star Wars* trilogy. *Star Wars* is one of those rare films which completely breaks out of the historical progression of film. Nothing like it had been seen before. When trailers for the first of the *Star Wars* movie *A New Hope* were released in theatres, audiences scoffed. Lucas himself believed it would be a flop. Yet *Star Wars* was and continues to be a huge hit. The film has inspired numerous other outer-space science fiction films—not to mention multiple spin-offs, TV series, merchandise, comics, video games, and hundreds of novels. No other work has had as much popular culture impact as *Star Wars*.

The only director of this age who could rival Lucas for cultural impact is Steven Spielberg. Spielberg is probably the most talented director of the era, as well as one of the most versatile. Spielberg's 1975 film *Jaws* about a killer shark put him on the map as a director. He would go on to direct numerous sci-fi and adventure movies, such as *E.T.*, *Jurassic Park*, and the *Indiana Jones* series. He would also go on to direct several of the best historical films ever made, all of them about the Second World War: *Empire of the Sun*, *Saving Private Ryan*, and *Schindler's List*—movies of drama, tragedy, and beauty.

“A World Where Anything Is Possible.”

—Film of the 1990s and 2000s

Spielberg continued his excellent work into the next several decades. In 1993 he released *Jurassic Park*, the action-thriller about science gone too far in which a scientist reanimates dinosaurs using genetic material for a massive amusement park. Unsurprisingly, things do not go well.

Jurassic Park is one of the first in a trend of movies about the dangers of science and technology that were to appear over the next few decades. The most influential film of the period in this genre is arguably the 1999 film *The Matrix*. *The Matrix* is a film about a future in which nothing is as it seems, one never knows what is reality and what is not. While it is an excellent sci-fi story—an exploration of technology gone wrong—*The Matrix* is also a film about film. It is about the manipulation of real-

ity. What we perceive may not be the whole picture; in fact, it may not be real at all, but only what those orchestrating the illusion want us to see.

While the Nineties are dominated by the blockbuster pictures (action-thriller, sci-fi, and horror), it was not a total divergence from the themes so predominant in the films of past decades. If there was a director (or, rather, directors) who continued the tradition of attempting to tell the story of the American spirit in film today, it would be Joel and Ethan Coen. The brothers' career spans nearly forty years and counting. Their films are excellent across genres, from their comedies like *The Big Lebowski* and *Oh Brother Where Art Thou* (a retelling of the *Odyssey* set in Depression-era Mississippi) to their more serious films, such as their haunting Westerns *No Country for Old Men* and a remake of the John Wayne film *True Grit*, considered by many to be the best Western ever made.

What's Next?

Today, in many ways, it seems like film is a dying art. While a survey of the 1990s and 2000s reveals some truly great films, the truth is that filmmaking, and the quality of films released, has been in steady decline since the 1970s. This is due to a number of factors. The audience's ever-shortening attention span forces filmmakers to overuse action sequences and special effects. The result of the complete dissolution of any taboo about what can and cannot be shown in movies has not been scandal, however, but boredom.

Filmmakers are also increasingly outsourcing their own creative vision to technology. Computer Generated Imagery (or CGI) has taken the place of skillful camerawork, costuming, set design, and other staging effects that marked past films. In fact, CGI has perhaps done more to speed the degradation of film than any other factor. The superhero film is a classic example. Yet, despite recent advances in CGI, our eyes know something is not right. Those are not real buildings, real trees, real people. There is something sterile about CGI. There is less use of lighting and shadows, which marks so many great early films and which contributed so much to the artistry of film. Instead, we are left with colors just a little too vivid, with outlines just a little too sharp, with landscapes



Top: Richard Attenborough, Jeff Goldblum, Sam Neill, and Laura Dern in *Jurassic Park* (1993). Bottom: George Clooney and John Turturro in *Oh Brother Where Art Thou* (2000).

that lack the beauty that is only lent by natural imperfection.

This is not to say that there are no movies still being made which are works of art, and which will endure into future decades. The Coen Brothers have some excellent films made in the last several decades, the movies of Christopher Nolan, each crafted like a puzzle, playing with our minds, will undoubtedly be counted among the great films. But the greatest era of film is undeniably over.

Still, the mystique of film remains. Maybe it is because we want to escape the reality of modern life, where so little is beautiful, so little is true, into a world of lights and sounds, of attractive people and thrilling adventures. Maybe it is because film offers us a glimpse into our history, our identity as a people, as nothing else can. Maybe it's because no one can resist a good story, which the best films always are.



John A. Monaco

In his 1957 encyclical letter, *Miranda Proxus*, Pope Pius XII offered a cautious openness to the mass communications of his day, which included radio, television, and motion pictures. Cinema, in particular, is said to be “a worthy instrument by which men can be guided towards salvation, raised to higher things, and become really better.” Now, more than ever, there is a need for good and quality films which promote Catholic teaching and morals. Below is my top ten list of Catholic films, in ascending order.

10. *Silence* (2016)

This is one of the more recent movies on the list, and benefits from advancements in cinematography. The film follows two Jesuit missionaries in 17th-century Japan, who are seeking their former teacher after rumors that he apostatized. The two missionaries enter a Japan that is now hostile to the Catholic faith, but there remain pockets of persecuted, faithful Catholics, who

desire the sacraments and priests. The priests minister to the underground Church in Japan, offering the sacraments behind shuttered doors, all while trying to track down their former mentor. The movie draws heavily from Shūsaku Endō’s novel of the same name.

9. *The Flowers of St. Francis* (1950)

This movie follows the life of St. Francis of Assisi, one of the most well-known and recognized saints in the Church. It draws upon 14th century hagiographical sources to show how St. Francis and the Franciscan Order developed and grew. Viewers will enjoy St. Francis’ interactions with St. Clare, one of his first followers, and the way Francis inspired the order’s commitment to poverty, chastity, and obedience. And unlike *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* (1972), another film which follows the “Poor Man of Assisi,” this movie does not fall into the trap of exalting the charismatic elements of the Church with the institutional.

8. *Quo Vadis* (1951)

A story of true love, Christian persecution, and courage, *Quo Vadis* is set during Emperor Nero's persecutions. A veteran legate of the Roman army falls in love with a Christian woman, and together, experience first-hand the cruelty and insanity of Nero. Notable scenes include the return of St. Peter to Rome after an encounter with Christ on the road, a return which seals St. Peter's martyrdom. *Quo Vadis* is also notable for its impressive musical score, composed by Miklós Rózsa.

7. *I Confess* (1953)

Alfred Hitchcock directs this story of a fictional Catholic priest in Quebec City, put in a seemingly impossible situation. The priest, Father Logan, is accused of the murder of one of his parishioners. However, the real murderer went to Father Logan for confession. The movie highlights the importance of the sacramental demand for secrecy and the role of the priest as a mediator. Bound to the seal of the confessional, and framed for a murder he did not commit, will the priest receive justice?

6. *Brideshead Revisited* (1981)

Based off Evelyn Waugh's 1945 novel of the same name, this film explores questions about friendship, family conversion, marriage, and the place of Catholicism in aristocratic England. The main character, Charles Ryder, is an agnostic-atheist, who befriends the wealthy and troubled Lord Sebastian Flyte, son of influential British aristocrats, and whose mother, Lady Marchmain, is known for her devout Catholic faith. The dignity of matrimony and conversion are both major themes in the movie.

5. *The Bells of St. Mary's* (1945)

Possibly one of, if not the most iconic Catholic films ever made, it features Bing Crosby as the pleasant Father O'Malley, and Ingrid Bergman as Sister Mary Benedict, both of whom work to solve the issues surrounding their deteriorating parish school, and whose efforts are contrasted by difference in approach. The musical talents of Crosby and Bergman, coupled with the overall innocence of parochial school life, gives this movie a pleasant, if not nostalgic, vibe. This is a Hollywood classic, hearkening to an era of unapologetic masculinity and femininity in priesthood and religious life.

4. *A Man for All Seasons* (1966)

In an age where there are attacks and attempts to radically redefine the institution of marriage, Catholics need to look no further than the example of St. Thomas More. This film captures the drama of a faithful layman and statesman who, despite pressure to the contrary, did not back down from defending God's law. Viewers will be inspired by More's steadfastness in the face of royal favors and threats, and by his long-suffering when others bear false witness against him.

3. *King of Kings* (1961)

This film is a faithful and dramatic portrayal of the events of Christ's life as told through a mixing of the four Gospel accounts. What sets *King of Kings* apart from other movies attempting something similar is its incredible musical score and detailed sets. From start to finish, *King of Kings* feels like a 168-minute prayer. Jeffrey Hunter's performance as Jesus Christ is second-to-none, and by his acting, he represents well the peace and patience of our Savior.

2. *The Mission* (1986)

In the heart of South America, the Spanish Jesuits begin a mission to the native Guaraní, an indigenous tribe within the thick jungles of Paraguay. Later joined by a repentant slave trader, the Jesuits teach the Christian faith and sustainability to the natives. The mission becomes a place of conversion, prayer, and true enlightenment. However, trouble emerges when the Portuguese and Spanish sign a treaty which endangers the survival of the mission. Highlights of the movie include Father Gabriel playing the oboe for the natives, as well as teaching them to sing sacred polyphony.

1. *The Passion of the Christ* (2004)

Directed by Mel Gibson, and starring a practicing Catholic actor in Jim Caviezel, this is a powerful, controversial, and faithful account of Christ's Passion. The film draws upon the four Gospels, as well as the *Via Dolorosa* devotions, and offers a visually stunning, sorrowful, and meditative representation of Christ's sacrifice. From the Agony in the Garden to the centurion piercing His side with a spear, Gibson's portrayal of the Passion will remain with you years after watching.



Don't Judge a Book by Its Movie:

Film Icons vs. Literary Symbols

Jonathan Wanner

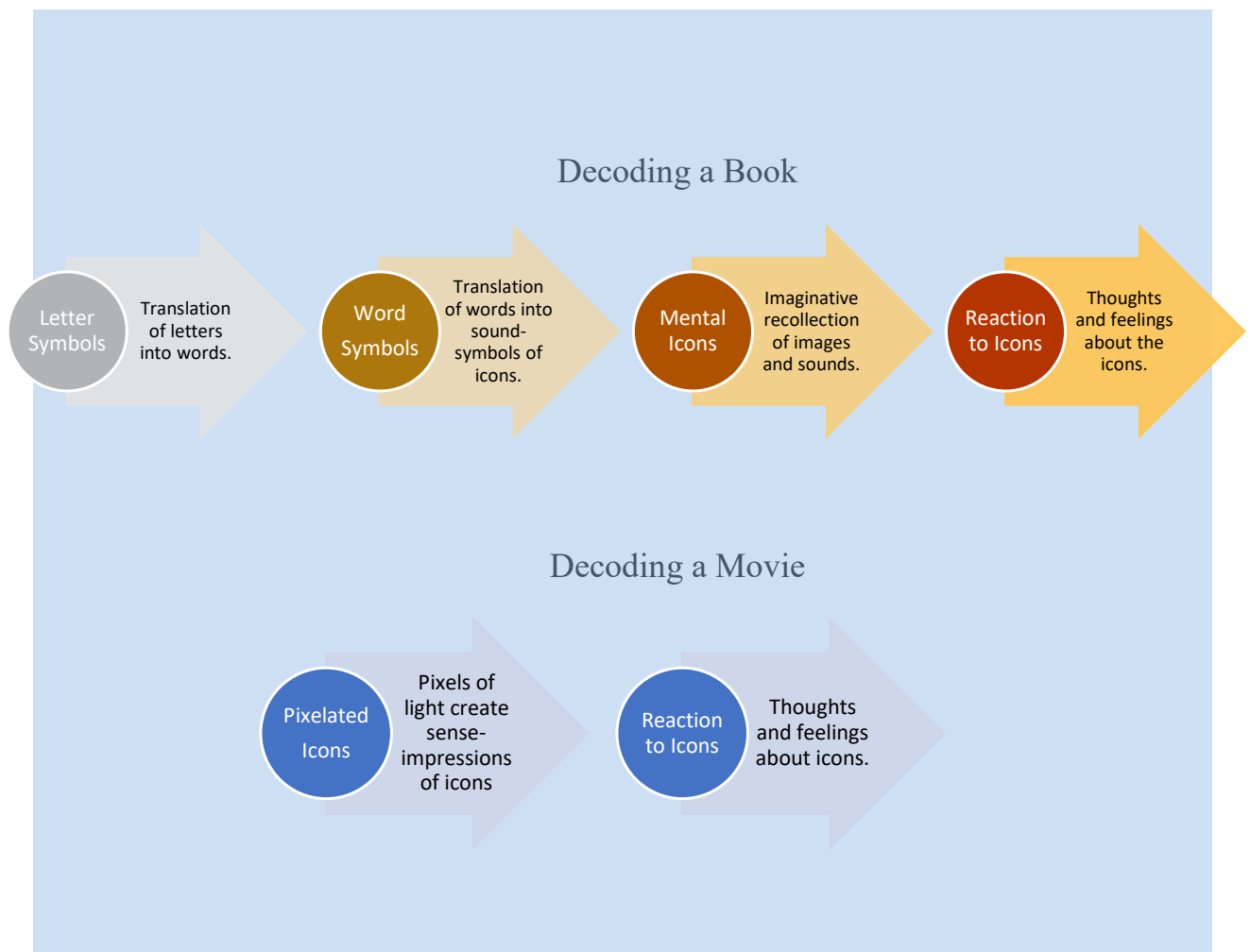
Many bibliophiles would rather take a punch in the gut than watch a film that is an unfaithful adaptation of a book. After all, who can forget the totally random romance plot appended to *The Hobbit* movies, the nonsensical love affairs between heroes and villains in recent adaptations of *Beowulf* (1999 and 2007), or the overwrought brattiness of *Emma* (2020)? No longer do we judge a book by its cover: we judge it by its movie. Yet, even if a film director were to swear an oath of absolute loyalty to the source text, motion pictures would remain fundamentally different from novels, both in form and material. We ought not expect the same experience, the same result, or even the same purpose when each medium has its own natural advantages and limitations. Before we can understand what these two poles are, however, we must define each medium and consider the degree to which they intersect.

The primary difference between a movie and a book is the mode of expression: films, by and large, depict a series of *icons*, whereas books present a series of *symbols*. By “icons” I don’t mean the egg tempera images that deck sacred halls. The term, in this case, is semiological. An icon is a sign that visually resembles what it represents. A symbol does not.¹ Take an oak tree. In a movie, an oak is an icon because, despite being a mere bundle of pixels, it resembles a real tree; in a book, however, you do not literally see bark or foliage when you peer at the word “tree.” The lines and swerves of the letters are meaningful only because, taken together, they represent a sound—“tree”—and that sound, in turn, conjures a mental image that resembles an actual tree.² Of course, a mental image is an icon as well. A tree in your mind is not actually made of wood and plant matter, even though its form resembles an oak. Rather, the tree is made of you—or, at least, your mind, which, although it is immaterial, has the miraculous

ability to take the form of sense-impressions, like wax when it receives the imprint of a seal.³ In other words, the icons that books project in your mind are constructed not from pixels, but from your own memories of reality. Even fantastic characters are founded upon memory: we conceive of giants when we imaginatively apply the largeness of mountains to humans, just as we construct unicorns when we combine the memories of two real beings, a horn and a horse. Movies, on the other hand, depict a series of ready-made sense impressions. We need no imagination or memory to view the characters, props, and scenery. Rarely do they demand that the audience mentally recall images or sounds, let alone combine several memories in fanciful ways.

As slight as the distinction between icon and symbol may seem (or between a pixelated icon and a phantasm of the memory), the effects of

this difference are monumental. Consider duration. The vast majority of movies are 80-120 minutes long.⁴ Among book editors, the common rule of thumb is that an average book runs 90,000 words, roughly five hours of reading. The primary cause of this difference is the elaborate process of decoding that books demand: readers must convert letters into sounds, weld syllables into words, and translate words into mental icons. Indeed, this last step commands readers to flex the biceps of their brains: they must mentally deal out every sense-impression a story describes, costing time and effort. Films, on the other hand, gratify eye and ear with icons that are instantly intelligible: superheroes, atomic explosions, and muscle cars flash before the eyes, supplying the body the sights and sounds that the soul would otherwise labor to depict.

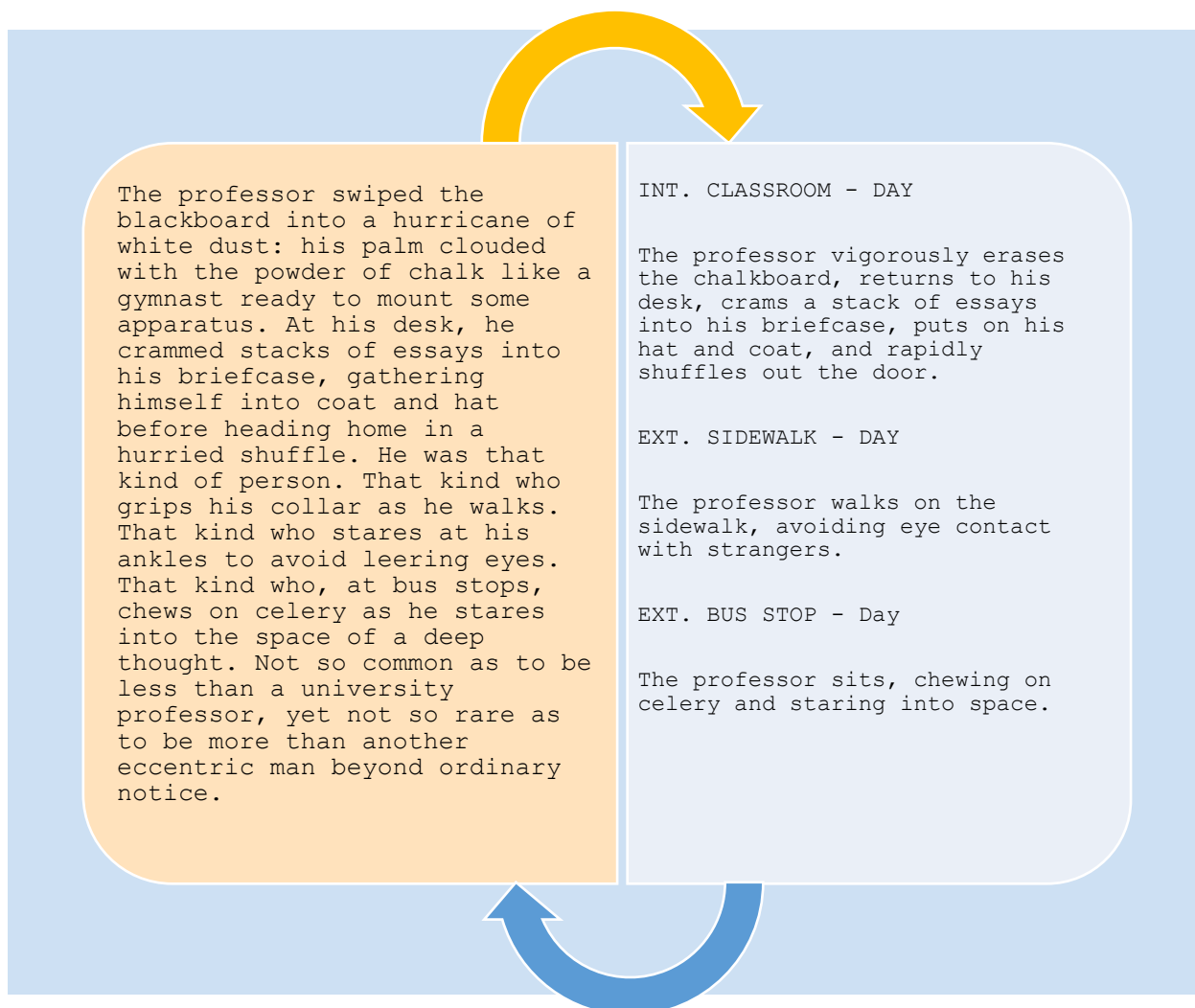


In other words, a movie shows you a story, whereas a book tells you to show yourself a story. Even when movies include “telling” in the form of dialogue, they enact the dialogue by showing characters talking. No so for books; they tell us characters are talking.

The differences between these two media become more acute when we attempt to translate one into the other. Consider the following literary description (left side) and its cinematic counterpart (right side).

In this case, the literary description offers figurative devices and rhetorical schemes that the film lacks: metaphors (*i.e.*, “a hurricane of white dust,” “gymnast”), alliterations (heading home), anaphora (“That kind who . . . That kind who”), and antithesis (“not so common . . . yet not so rare”). Of course, the film could depict a “hurricane” or a “gymnast,” but to include them here would seem at best eccentric and at worst disorienting. The motion picture, rather, is more

suited to rhetorical effects unique to its iconic nature: picturesque camera angles, arresting scenery, dance-like gestures, statue-worthy stances, ambient sounds, and the vexation or resolution of silence. A further difference between the above scenes is the vantage point of each. The literary description requires a narrator to construct the scene, but the exact “camera angle” one imagines is completely within the reader’s control. A movie, however, pre-determines the viewer’s range of vision. Finally, there is a difference in the monetary cost of the medium: the literary description would take pennies to print or to publish online, whereas the film scene—even despite its short length—requires the expense of a camera, lights, a set, actors, costumes, makeup, props, a crew, a computer with editing software, *etc.* Most movies in theaters have budgets well over \$100,000,000. As recent as 2019, the budget for the popular *Avengers: Endgame* was as much as \$400,000,000,



though the investment had great returns, grossing \$2,797,800,564 worldwide.⁵

There are, of course, exceptions to many of these differences. Films, in several ways, can boast some literary properties. To compete with the duration of books, TV series can stream for many seasons and TV shows can run for years on end. Films, like literature, can visually depict figures of speech. This is especially the case for cartoons: Bugs Bunny can be so scared that he jumps out of his bones. Movies can feature a narrator's voice in the background, e.g., *A Christmas Story*. What is more, they can include "intertitles"—printed text that appears on the screen. *Star Wars* famously begins with words that crawl into space, and most films have subtitle options. Add to this the fact that films, like books, can develop symbols. *Citizen Kane*, for instance, features a cheap sled that represents the loss of innocence. Nor are movies necessarily void of imagination. They can provoke one's memory by withholding images and sounds from the audience. Horror movies are a prime example: is the monster behind the curtain? If we exaggerate these literary elements, the result is an "arthouse" film—a film that defies norms of popular entertainment by establishing higher intellectual and aesthetic standards, usually by emphasizing symbols and developing multiple layers of meaning. Examples include Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, and Terrence Malick's *Tree of Life*. The strength of this genre is its inclusion of symbols that challenge the audience to exercise their reason far more than the average couch-potato flick.

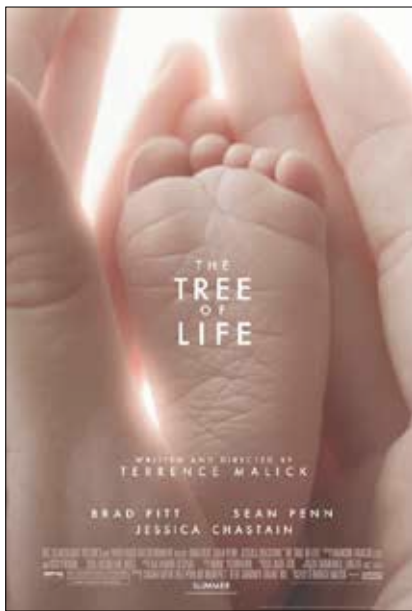
Books, as well, can imitate movies by incorporating icons: illustrations, photos, press-the-button electronic effects, or other interactive video and audio features as one may find in text-based computer games for children. When we exaggerate these elements, the result is easy-to-read literature: picture books, electronic books, comic strips, comic books, graphic novels, and video game books. The benefit

The material of
a book is more
than a bundle of
pixels, and even
more than ink and
pulp: it is the soul
itself—your mind—
the keeping place
of God's image.

of these genres is their recreational character; consumption requires little effort. For babies, this quality is essential, as picture books expose them to images that would otherwise be hard to access or understand. The same quality makes such comic books as *Tintin* or *Loupio* suitable for relaxation and entertainment. However, the more electronic a book is, the less educational it is: the spectacle of lights and sounds impede clear thinking and the ability to focus for long spans. Moreover, the ready-made images on screens prevent students from exercising their reason and imagination. I have known students who cannot tell a story without scooping a phone from a pocket: they want the screen to tell the story that their words fail to imagine. To one who has no imagination, words are a bike without a chain.

As much as books and movies can imitate each other, their differences outweigh their similarities. Their natural advantages are not the same. Films, because they offer a consistent and repeatable feast of the senses, have the potential to establish a communal vision of reality. Every onlooker beholds the same sights, attends to the same sounds; the story feels immersive, first-hand, actual. A film's repeatability allows fans to share and revisit a transcendental vision. There is beauty as well in the fact that such a vision is derived from the grand-scale collaboration of many artists. On a more practical scale, films, when produced well, are an effective way of teaching practical skills. As cautious as I am about YouTube, I am thankful for the content creators who have taught me how to prune tomato vines, write Copperplate calligraphy, and hand-dip candles. In each instance, the how-to video provided clear visual models of the process and end-result. Finally, films are, by and large, easier to consume than books, so that they are naturally suited to recreation.

Nevertheless, books are humanity's greater handmaid. A movie's audience is, more often than not, in a passive state; the viewer does not



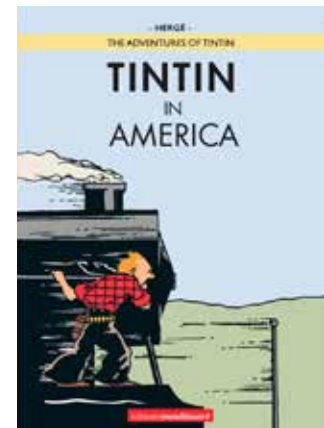
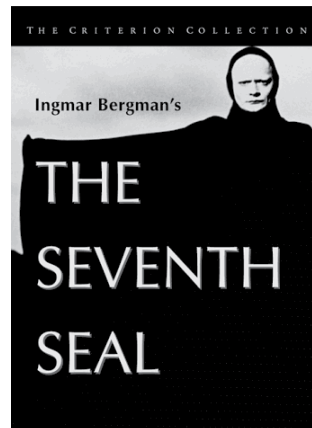
The Tree of Life is a 2011 American art film written and directed by Terrence Malick and featuring a cast of Brad Pitt, Sean Penn, Hunter McCracken, Laramie Eppler, Jessica Chastain, and Tye Sheridan in his debut feature film role. The film chronicles the origins and meaning of life by way of a middle-aged man's childhood memories of his family living in 1950s Texas, interspersed with imagery of the origins of the known universe and the inception of life on Earth. In December 2019, *The Tree of Life* topped The Associated Press' list of the best films of the 2010s. It received three Oscar nominations: Best Picture, Best Director and Best Cinematography.

choose the icons. Literature, on the other hand, summons the reader to a more noble role: that of an artist. A reader is a director, an actor, a set designer, a costume designer, a light technician, and a sound technician all rolled into one. He chooses the pitch, the tempo, the volume, and the timbre of the words; he chooses the tone of voice and the terms he wants to emphasize;

he chooses the camera angle, the facial expressions, the scenery, the ambiance. The author simply provides the script. This dear labor we call reading—even when done in silence—calls the whole human person into activity: the body grasps symbols; the reason translates them; the imagination projects memories of sights and sounds; and the body responds with passions. The result is one-of-a-kind. Your imaginative choices are yours alone; no one else possesses your memory. Like an illuminated manuscript, reading is valuable precisely because it is rare and cannot be reproduced. It is a DIY act, a handmade creation, and not one you can purchase on Etsy. After all, the material of a book is more than a bundle of pixels, and even more than ink and pulp: it is the soul itself—your mind—the keeping place of God's image. This is the ultimate leisure of reading: that by recreating an author's story in the soul, we read in ourselves the likeness of the Creator.

Endnotes:

- ¹ M. Montgomery, A. Durant, et al. *Ways of reading: Advanced reading skills for students of English literature*. (London: Routledge, 1992). 193.
- ² In the case of deaf readers, visual sign language replaces aural language: written words recollect hand signals, and hand signals in turn recollect mental images.
- ³ Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. Joe Sachs (Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 2004), II.412b6-9.
- ⁴ Przemyslaw Jarzabek, "Are New Movies Longer Than They Were 10, 20, 50 Years Ago?," *Towards Data Science*, December 16, 2018, <https://towardsdatascience.com/are-new-movies-longer-than-they-were-10h20-50-year-ago-a35356b-2ca5b>.
- ⁵ "Movie Budgets," *The Numbers*, Nash Information Services, LLC, 2021, <https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/budgets/all>.



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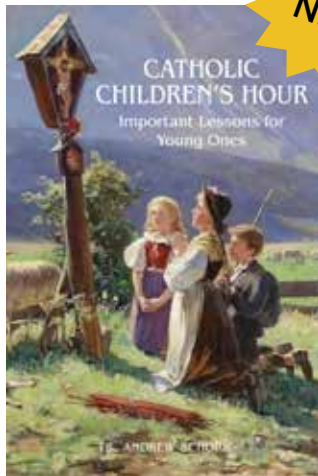
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A Spanish Mystic of Paint

Francisco de Zurbarán and the Spanish Counter-Reformation

Andrew P. Latham

In 1634, Francisco made his way tentatively through the heavily Moorish-influenced courtyard of the *Palacio Real de Madrid*—the Royal Palace of the King of Spain—summoned there to lend paint to the walls. There was much that was unlikely about this moment. He was born a peasant, into a family of destitute day-laborers in rural Northern Andalusia. Moreover, the opulence of his surroundings was foreign to him—almost distasteful. He was an ascetic at heart, a man who would be influenced by the mystics: Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, and yes, even Miguel de Molinos. And while the latter would be condemned as a heretic and imprisoned in Rome for his unorthodox understanding of the influence of the Holy Ghost on the soul, Francisco was steadfastly a student of these and of the Quietist and mystical movements sweeping through Spain. No, there was nothing mystical about the *Palacio*, and certainly nothing mystical about being named the Painter to the King. But the peas-

ant-turned-master refused to bathe in the praise he earned. Instead, Francisco de Zurbarán focused inwards like the mystics he admired, and has gifted us with artwork incomparable in the history of Catholic art.

There has seldom been a collection of Catholic heroes as was seen in Spain immediately following the Protestant Reformation. Through Providence and grace, the Iberian peninsula was spared the ravages of the revolution sweeping through the north. One could describe the Church in Spain as turning inwards, both holding fast to doctrine and developing it further through the saints that would help define Catholic theology for the next few centuries.

This renewed emphasis on theology impacted not only the clergy and churches, but artists as well. The combination of literary and artistic output during this time earned it the title the “Golden Age” of Spain. And while artists like Murillo and Velazquez are more well known, the contributions made by Francisco de Zur-

barán should not be overlooked, since he among all the other masters of the Spanish Golden Age exemplifies what Spanish Catholicism was following the Protestant Reformation.

One of his first commissions was the same that catapulted him into the center of the art world. Simply titled *Crucifixion* (1627), he painted it for the monastery of *San Pablo el Real* in Seville. In the dimly-lit sacristy where it was installed, the image of Christ awed the faithful. A later commentator noted that it appeared to be a sculpture rather than a painting. Zurbarán envisioned the crucified Christ suspended outside of time and place. Emerging from an inky backdrop, the details on the Figure of Christ seem to dance, illuminated by a flood of light from the side.

His expert depictions of fabric—seen in the loincloth on the *Crucifixion*—would be one of his hallmarks, owing to his humble early days

as a weaver's apprentice. The ascetic religious orders naturally made him their painter, and his best work is associated with monastic legends. In fact, he painted over 40 portraits of another mystic: St. Francis of Assisi. The most famous of these, *Saint Francis in Meditation*, is at once pious and haunting, delicate and rough, hidden by shadow and illuminated by grace.

Indeed, Zurbarán's style is constrained and linear, and yet free and painterly. He uses the broad, dark shadows made popular by Caravaggio in Rome a century before, but abandons the dark shadows at times and allows a generous use of color in some of his most harmonious compositions. One of these departures is seen in *Saint Hugo in the Refectory* (1650/1660) which depicts a community of Carthusians at table for the midday meal, with the aged Hugo gingerly stepping in, unnoticed by all except a young waiter. The sternness of the seven men seated



at the table is enlivened by the paintings on the wall, and a glimpse through the door. The artist is not constrained by contrasts of dark and light, but here focuses on the energy of characterization and a refined workmanship unrivaled by many contemporaries.

In work after work, he modulates his smooth surfaces so that they express every sort of texture. In *The Apotheosis of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Zurbarán again shows his mastery of fabric—and for good measure, the clouds of Heaven. Relying on the common trope of a horizontal line of clouds separating the Church Triumphant from the Militant, there is yet none of the conventional poetry which usually characterizes such compositions; instead, a manly and peaceful devotional prose.

This is not to say that Francisco was without flaws. This was Spain, after all, and there was nothing that Spanish artists like better than to depict their *Señora*, the Blessed Virgin Mary with the tenderness and care owed her. But this also meant that painters, most notably

Murillo, were almost mandated to make her a pretty, appealing girl to the point of saccharinity, surrounded by monastic saints who cuddle the Christ child. Zurbarán, in his turn, would fall into this trap of sentimentality, as seen in the *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist*, the cupid-like figures of the saintly children offering one another a bird while Our Lady looks on with a Disney-princess bemusement.

However, Zurbarán should not be defined by these rare missteps. He is nonetheless both emphatic and reticent, entirely able to depict the other-worldly even when the subject seems tangible. One need only glance for a moment at *The Martyrdom of Saint Serapion* (1628) to see that this is one of the most dramatic paintings from a time and a people that treasured the dramatic. But the drama is reserved and noble. Commissioned by the Mercedarian Order to hang in the funerary chapel hall of their monastery in Seville, this is perhaps the most understated martyr's death in the history of art. Again,



he shows us his trademark: light, dark, shadow, fabric, folds, wrinkles, all competing in the space, yet harmonious in their elegance. The tension of the ropes nearly hidden in the blackness is jarring when compared to the limp, heavy weight of the martyr's head and hands, the masterful fabric seeming to hold Saint Serapion aloft as his soul passes to Heaven.

He is in his own fashion one of the most uncompromisingly Catholic and serious painters the world has seen. He is certainly the one who understood the Mysticism and piety of the saints who came before him, and of all Spanish Baroque painters of the seventeenth century, perhaps the *most* Spanish.

Works depicted in this article: *Crucifixion* (1627), *St. Francis in Meditation*, *St. Hugo in the Refectory* (1650/1660), *The Lamb of God* (1635-40), *The Martyrdom of St. Serapion* (1628), *The Apotheosis of St. Thomas Aquinas*, *The Madonna and Child with the Infant St. John the Baptist*.





The Catholic Films Still Begging to Be Produced:

A Troubling Meditation on the “Drama of Truth”

John Rao, D.Phil., Oxon.

Most people with some knowledge of the history of film probably think of the role of the Catholic Church solely with reference to her moral critique, with the American-born Legion of Decency (1934), and Pope Pius XI’s Encyclical Letter, *Vigilanti cura* (1936) strongly promoting its program for monitoring the cinema as talking points. Nevertheless, the true story of her involvement with the cinema is more complex than that.

For one thing, the moral critique went deeper than mere objection to risqué screen shots, as can be seen in discussions during the 1930s of the disquieting psychological impact on an audience enamored of a given actor noted for

playing both villainous as well as self-sacrificing, heroic roles. What conclusion would it draw therefrom?

Moving on to more positive ground, such psychological reflections translated into public statements of appreciation and prizes for what were appreciated as spiritually insightful productions, Federico Fellini’s (1920-1993) *La Strada* (1954) being a prime example. Moreover, no one questions that—whatever his personal piety may or may not have been—Catholic themes inspired Robert Bresson (1901-1999), one of the most innovative cinematic geniuses of mid-century. Here was a man who put works like Georges Bernanos’ (1888-1948) penetrating, though terribly disturbing, *Diary of a Country*

Priest (1936) on the wide screen (1951), with a soul-searching care that limited the actual number of his films to the more essential advantage of their quality.

Still, what motivates my present “meditation” is not really past Catholic involvement, directly and indirectly, in the promotion of psychologically stimulating film. What I think needs to be emphasized here is the need for the cinema to reject “the world, the flesh, and the devil,” and to look for succor from Catholicism in the future for the sake of the very survival of drama—spiritual, mental, and physical—in general.

My thoughts in this regard were triggered by my trying to imagine how any serious movie audience could long endure a film whose premise was the thrill generated by participation in a New York City cocktail party. Aside from the sparkle offered by the drink itself—which admittedly can offer a quite tempting incentive to come—the only raising of a heartbeat that I have regularly experienced at these intellectually incomparably boring events is that provided by my sprints from one terrifyingly predictable *Zeitgeist*-inspired pocket of pointless babble to the next.

There have, however, been exceptions; Catholic-inspired exceptions. What comes most readily to mind in this regard is the havoc that I witnessed in the 1980s and early 1990s whenever I went to such events with my predecessor as chairman of the Roman Forum, Dr. William Marra. Probably the most totally unselfconscious man in the world, this disciple of Dietrich von Hildebrand unleashed natural and supernatural forces that immediately transformed the men and women populating these pockets of babble, all too convinced that their mantra-laden judgments were the height of human wisdom, into raging mobs. How? Simply by expressing one or more honest-to-goodness thoughts, both philosophical and theological, and indicating that substantive ideas had actual life and death significance for everyone in the room.

Dr. Marra was the host of a radio program called *The Drama of Truth*. It was precisely the message of the reality and positive value of this central drama of human existence—cherished by a small elite of ancient Greeks, but only really drilled into the popular consciousness by the “sword” that Christ and Christ’s Church

brought into everyday existence—that he propagated. The dangerous, existential, long-term consequences of joining in in his electrifying style of evangelization were confirmed to me when I sought to imitate him on my own steam. I mercilessly wreaked havoc at extended family dinners, throwing unexpected Catholic curve balls smack into the stomach of those used to the “rules of the game” prohibiting the discussion of anything that might require a change of course in the static, secular, dead-end routine.

If depiction of such scenes—once again, regularly ending in rabid shouting matches—were not sufficient to bring a serious cinema audience to its feet—either in sympathy for the zombies, or with enthusiasm at the sight of the living sword of the truth overcoming noxious tedium, I don’t know what would do the trick. And remember that I am speaking here merely of cocktail party and dining room theatre. Imagine the effect once Catholic stimulated events involving ideas and heroic figures on a city, national, and worldwide stage would honestly be presented to the moviegoer in all of their untarnished reality!

To cut to the quick, it seems to me that there are innumerable Catholic-inspired films begging to be produced, through which the exciting, life-changing impact that our Holy Faith brings to a world that is smugly and thickly trapped in the pointlessness of “business as usual” should easily be translated into screen classics. Allow me to suggest three possible award-winning “Drama of Truth” productions, with the scripts practically ready-made for immediate use.

The first of these would center upon the stirring tragedy of two incredibly heroic individuals—Pope St. Martin I (598-655) and St. Maximus the Confessor (580-662)—linked together in battle against an invasive State whose unjust demands our contemporary tyrants are eagerly striving to outdo in our own wretched times. Their steadfast refusal to assent to a politically generated dogmatic statement baptizing the latest heresy—the one taught by the Monothelites—led to their plunge into a living hell. Martin’s health was sucked from him on an endless journey to Constantinople under subhuman conditions. He was left chained on the deck of his boat to be exposed to the jests and insults of the population upon arrival, tossed for a long stay in a prison where he suffered cold, hunger, and thirst, then stripped of nearly all his clothing, loaded with chains, and dragged through the



streets of the city. After a second bout of prison time, the pope was sentenced to exile in a famine-ridden location that finally did him in.

Poor Maximus—for whom the title of “Confessor” as opposed to Martyr always seemed like something of a cheat to me—was also tried twice. He finally had his tongue cut out—to silence his “treasonous” critiques of the State—and his right hand removed—so that he could no longer write epistles contrary to the official theology, which was once again seeking to drag a message promoting transformation in Christ into the soul-killing, “business as usual” mud. The only indignity that Maximus, like Martin, managed to avoid was that of being forced to take a “safe, effective, and free vaccination” with periodic boosters depriving him of every remaining life sustaining juice.

My second choice for dramatic exploitation would focus on the Jesuits in the eighteenth century. One could be forgiven for thinking that this particular source was already exhausted by the producers of the “The Mission,” which depicted the Jesuit role in seeking to defend the Indians from slavery at the hands of a rapacious—and Enlightenment inspired—Portugal.

Nevertheless, that noble episode of their history is just the tip of the iceberg where the dramatic lives of the Sons of St. Ignatius are concerned. Little compares in spectacle to the eighteenth century incidents directly leading to the step-by-step dissolution of the Society of Jesus in Portugal, France, and Spain: except for the brutal consequences emerging therefrom.

You name it and you will find it, in terms of gripping theatrical contributions to the brewing attack, with the formation of secret, European-wide conspiratorial circles, sleazy plots hatched by religious orders, allied with unscrupulous politicians, and *causes célèbres* concocted by a bloodthirsty and lying media at the top of the list. Supposed Jesuit manipulation of the terror engendered by the fires and tsunami brought about through the Lisbon Earthquake played a major role in the gathering storm. So did the claim of their support for the attempted murder of King Joseph I of Portugal on his return from a sordid, illicit, evening tryst, through the medium of a number of men and women then tortured and brutally executed in response. Financial shenanigans bankrupting the wealthy denizens of the island of Martinique helped mightily to administer the coup de grace to the Jesuits in France, aided by the maneuverings of Louis XV’s mistress, Madame de Pompadour, angered by their reproach of regal hanky-panky.

And then there were the tragic results of this mayhem, all of them suitable, once again, for stirring up the movie audience to outrage and tears. Here, too, “you name it and you will find it”: “impartial” judges of Jesuit misdeeds chosen from among their most rancorous and mendacious enemies; judgments delivered regarding the irreparable sins of the Society throughout the globe after an investigation begun and ended with a simple knock at the door of one of the Society’s houses in the Iberian Peninsula; the deportation of six thousand Jesuits, some on ships that wandered about like that of Jews leaving Germany in the 1930s, finding ports closed off to them, and abject poverty their lot if accepted; priests once famed for their intellectual and missionary accomplishments left to rot in a Lisbon prison, with the tide waters of the Atlantic bathing their limbs on cue each and every day; endlessly repeated caricatures of Jesuit crimes that—interestingly enough—provided all the basic stories that were resurrected in

the latter part of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries to form the bulk of anti-Semitic abuse.

Given the number of years and the extensive geographic frame involved, purists might object that a major problem for producing this Jesuit “Drama of Truth” would be its violation of the Aristotelian “unities” of time, space, and action. No doubt about it; a little “poetic license” would certainly be required to get the job done artistically. And the same would be true for the third film on my list of future box office hits.

Film number three would center around the tale that many of those reading this article were themselves active participants in for decades. This is the saga of humiliated, persecuted, and libeled Traditionalists, brutally driven from their churches and their schools: first of all, for the crime of loyalty not just to one, but to all of the dogmas, moral principles, and rituals of a Faith that saved them from the living death of “business as usual”; and secondly, as time went on, for the even more appalling offense of corrupting the youth to join their ranks.

How well I myself remember the theatrics of some of the atrocities committed, and the tragic pain of those stunned faithful subject to them, exiled from their spiritual and educational homes due to the most unpredictably offensive actions of pastors and their suborned but often more fanatical lay minions. True believers fled in horror at the sight of rosaries, condemned as superstitious beads, being tossed at them in the pews; the bedlam caused by a priest (and I joke not) driving a Volkswagen down the central nave of his church to symbolize “renewal”; the bureaucratic *Diktat* issued in the midst of a massively-attended Hispanic religious festival, demanding instantaneous replacement of traditional devotions with rock songs that any self-respecting teenager would have spat out of his mouth like a piece of tainted meat; the tossing of liturgical books and breviaries in heaps on street corners for rubbish collection; the dismantling and dumping onto the sidewalk of literally the entire interior of a church around the corner from me, with the brawn provided by elementary school students who were told to explain to baffled passersby that they were “merely ridding true religion of excessive Italian influence”; and, most importantly, the humiliation of a loyal son of the Church, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, at

the hands of a self-appointed Kangaroo Court in Rome. Thankfully, the drama of those days also offered inspirational moments of glory as well, with depiction of the takeover of St. Nicholas de Chardonnet providing a chance to raise the rafters at the local movie house.

Making the production of “The Trad Story” still more difficult than any lack of a tight unity of time, place, and action, would also be the want of a genius like Robert Bresson to depict the psychological development on the part of the people involved during the decades concerned. That development is illustrated by nothing less than the very fact that *The Angelus* is sponsoring this issue on film. Although I personally know a number of those of our ranks who were indeed already cinematically engaged before the *Novus Ordo* barged into our lives for the punishment of our sins, most of us were indeed probably more involved in discussion of the wide screen only for (justly) condemning recognized moral turpitude.

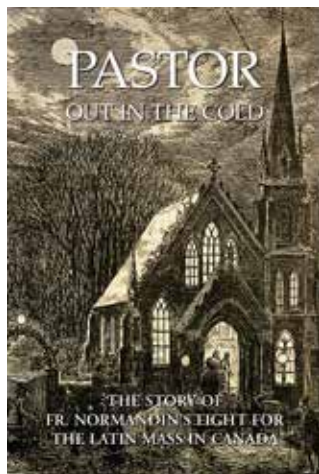
But what I mean to underline here is much more vital than any earlier cinema deficiency on our part. *It is the fact that we Traditionalists have grown in all of our interests in these decades of our general discontent.* Just as the concern for “active participation of the laity” in the celebration of Holy Mass has now been most successfully achieved in the chapels and churches of the Traditionalist Movement, it is in venues that *we* provide that serious supernatural and natural, political and cultural truths are not merely discussed “academically,” but—ininitely more importantly—urged upon men, women, and society as practical, life-changing necessities. In short, I look to our circles today not just for outraged reactions to contemporary horrors, but also for positive investigation of all manner of issues, aesthetic ones like moving pictures included, in a way that at the beginning our saga, I do not think I could have hoped for in the same way.

To paraphrase Charles Maurras—turning his motto for the Action Française from national to cinematic questions in a way that involves Catholicism—“all that which is dramatic belongs to us”! But, alas, I must end this meditation by admitting a major obstacle to the realization of my prediction of box office success for our gripping stories regarding St. Martin, St. Maximus, the Jesuits, Archbishop Lefebvre, and Purged Traditionalists in general. For, although we

know that we have already seen great producers inspired by Catholic themes, and we can readily hope to have more of them milking an elegant sufficiency of gripping topics to put on screen, what about the public for whom they would be destined?

I started this piece making reference to “a serious movie audience.” Does such a thing exist any longer? The collapse of the quality of the spectating public from the dawn of the “talkies” to our own day is painfully obvious in the decline of dialogue—witnessed to by everything from the abandonment by producers of historical and cultural references that current viewers could no longer understand to a dreadfully impoverished vocabulary and to the

replacement of the very time used for speech by endless loud and vulgar “action.” Yes, there would be action galore in my “Catholic films begging to be produced,” but it would be action that requires explanation, with this, in turn, necessitating uplifting dialogue. Would our audiences, composed of “creatures of a day” nurtured by nothing other than “business as usual” concerns from cradle to grave, be open to enlightenment? When future Catholic films depicting the “Drama of Truth” are produced, will there be anyone to watch them other than the living dead, leaping to their feet only to demand to be left alone in peace? That is a troubling question to contemplate to say the least.



Pastor Out in the Cold

by Rev. Fr. Yves Normandin

This is the story of the Canadian priest Fr. Normandin, who fought for the Traditional Latin Mass in Canada during the years closely following Vatican II. His narration is invaluable as it stands, to this day, as an undismissible historical testimony. His eye-witness account of what life was like for a priest in the 1970's attempting to remain faithful to Eternal Rome and the Mass of All Time is a reminder to us all what it was actually like in the time immediately following Vatican II.

What we enjoy today in the preservation of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is due to the heroic efforts of those unwavering fighters who came before us. We owe them a great debt and should be inspired by what they did and what they were able to achieve. Fr. Normandin's is interesting to all those who value the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass because he explains how we, the next generation of Catholics, almost lost it.

“To remain silent, or to withdraw into solitude would be to misunderstand their mission and, for want of courage, to shun their sacred duty. But in the event of grave canonical penalties being incurred for refusing to obey unlawful authority, such penalties, resulting from loyalty to the Traditional Roman Mass, would without question be null and void. It follows that priests are bound to ignore such sanctions, and continue with even greater courage the good fight for the faith.”

—Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, 1975

Preface, *Pastor Out in the Cold*

131 pp. Softcover. 6" X 9". STK# 8799 \$14.95

“I am very pleased to recommend Father Yves Normandin's account to all who seek an understanding of what is happening within the Catholic Church.”

—Archbishop
Marcel Lefebvre,
Preface, *Pastor
Out in the Cold*



Films of Freedom

Bridget Bryan

“If you have a rich interior life . . . there probably isn’t that much difference between the inside and outside of a [prison] camp.”

—Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life: The Diaries and Letters of Etty Hillesum 1941-3.*¹

The three films *The Ninth Day*, *Sophie Scholl*, and *A Hidden Life*, each depict real-life heroes who chose, against great odds, to stand for truth. Though the first two movies were made over 15 years ago, they insisted on being included here. The setting of each is WWII Germany and Austria, under Nazi control. What follows is a brief review of each film with a nugget or two that will encourage exploring these films, all wrapped up by a string that binds them all together.

***The Ninth Day*, 2004**
Directed by Volker Schlöndorff

The Ninth Day is a German film (available with English subtitles). It’s loosely based on the

true story taken from Fr. Jean Bernard’s Nazi-era prison diary, now published as *Priestblock 25487: A Memoir of Dachau*. *Dachau*² is one of the more infamous concentration camps produced by Nazi Germany. The movie plot comes from one line in the priest’s diary, whereas all the details of the movies are pulled from the other details in the diary and other historical accounts of the time.

The priest is renamed Henry Kremer in the movie. He’s imprisoned with thousands of other priests in Dachau. In the midst of their unspeakable suffering and while staying faithful to their vocation, he is unexpectedly freed for a period of 9 days and goes home. During that time he is pressured by an SS Untersturmführer (played convincingly well by August Diehl), to

convince the bishop of Luxembourg to write a declaration supporting the Nazi regime. If Kremer agrees to these terms, he will be permanently freed, if not, he will be taken back to the misery of Dachau.

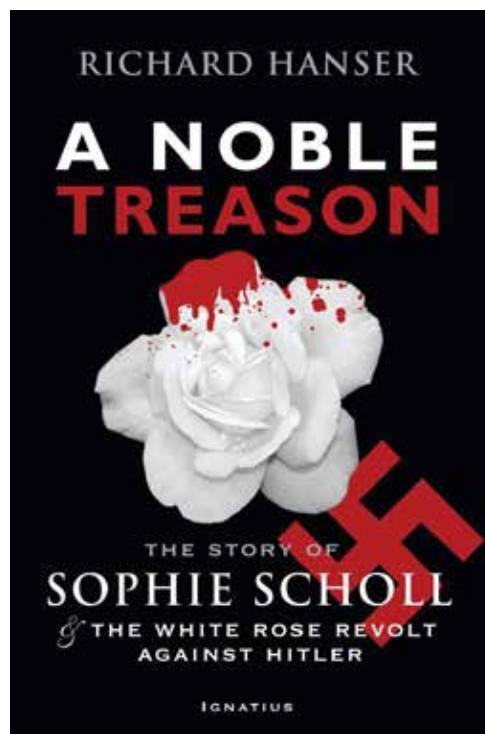
This plot unfolds over a gripping 1 hour and 38 minutes. Throughout the persecution in the prison camp, the interrogation, and pressure back in his hometown, one is moved by this priest's human struggle and his individual response in this time of crisis. *The Ninth Day* not only shows how the Church and her priests were also affected by the Nazi regime, but it moves one to appreciate our Catholic Faith and her strong priests even more and to realize that this priest was saying in the concentration camp the very Mass we have so comfortably here in our American chapels.

Sophie Scholl: The Final Days, 2005
Directed by Marc Rothemund

This two-hour German film with English subtitles depicts the last six days of Sophie Scholl, the young leader of the White Rose. The White Rose was a non-violent underground resistance group against the Nazi Regime. At the brightest part of her young life, she is arrested and imprisoned. The audience accompanies her through this ordeal, on the edge of their seats from her interrogation, torture, to her beheading. It's a gripping story that contrasts a noble, self-sacrificing heroine with the young, fun-loving college student and fiancé she also was. Set within the harsh realities of WWII Germany, the audience observes the great beauty of Sophie's heart and soul, combined with her good sense of humor and undaunted spirit. The movie draws upon many of the historical records left to us about Sophie, and about her brother and their search for the one true God. It is this search, this thirst for the living God that strengthens Sophie in her struggle to choose the right, and enables her to make one last act of joy before her death: "The sun is still shining."³

The Hidden Life, 2019
Directed by Terrence Malick

The most recent of the three films and the longest of the three is nearly three hours long: 2 hours and 54 minutes! As with several of Terrence Malick's films, sitting through this is definitely a commitment—I myself viewed the movie over the course of three nights. This director



Book available from Angelus Press.

is painstaking about everything that the camera touches, but in such a way that everything appears natural and relatable. (It took him three years to edit the film!)

A Hidden Life tells the little-known story of Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, (played by August Diehl), a peasant farmer from the Austrian Alps during the Nazi take-over of his country. Hitler has seized control over Austria and has mandated that all men in the army must swear an oath of allegiance to himself. This goes against the conscience of Franz, who though once a wild youth, became much more serious about his Faith and its obligations after his marriage to Fani, his valiant wife. Franz, after a long-tormented wrestling, decides he cannot fight for Hitler. What follows as the story unfolds are the consequences of following his conscience: imprisonment, interrogation, beatings, maltreatment, and finally death.

But before all of that, the viewer is swept away into the Austrian Alps to Franz's village and the simple peaceful ways of the old multi-generation farms. Stirred up in the viewer is love of Franz's land, so that when the camera takes us to the harsh confines of the prison, we sense the same loss and oppression that Franz

must have felt. While most films do have a certain art to them, this film *is* an art: it draws one to contemplation, and is made to be contemplated. It intentionally does not rush the plot as so many modern films do, whipping your attention from one shot one second, to another the next.

Mallick invites us to contemplate a visual masterpiece that appeals to all of the senses. Furthermore, he invites us to link the visible to the invisible. In the slow unfolding of the story we are actually able to get into Franz's head, and his wife's, to see what great love and affection they had for each other, and the wrestling with his conscience and the voices of all around him trying to excuse the easy way out. We see scenes that illustrate "I am the good shepherd . . . I know my sheep." Whether it is in the mountains or in the prison: "I am the way . . . I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved."⁴ The end result is the Christian's ultimate accomplishment: The Triumph of Failure. Franz's heroism and nobility has now caused him to be beatified and declared a martyr of the Catholic Church.⁵

The movie ends with this moving quote:

The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.—George Eliot

Deep Inside

Fr. Kremer, Sophie Scholl, and Franz Jägerstätter were ordinary people like you and me. Yet when their present life pressured them to deny higher truths, they rose to the occasion. Once they overcame their inward struggle, their agony, they were free, unchained by anything in this world, for their choices were not of this world. A certain interior life enabled these heroic lives.

"Each person has deep inside a place of freedom that no external power can take away because God himself is its source."⁶ This is interior freedom.

The minds of Fr. Kremer, Sophie Scholl, and Franz Jägerstätter were filled with this source, Light of Light. If we, like them, choose the truth, it is as if the room of our lives reorganizes itself, and everything becomes more simple: "If thy eye be single thy whole body will be lightsome."⁷ No matter where you are

in your life, whether you are in a prison cell, teaching, praying, holding screaming babies, or crunching numbers, life becomes a chapel, like a monks cell: *ad orientem*, where one can enter within and worship at any time. God sculpts his other Christs from the inside out.

One of the quiet pivotal conversations that influenced Franz was the conversation with the village artist Ohlendorf. He converses with Franz as he paints murals in the small village Church: "Christ's life is a demand. You don't want to be reminded of it. . . . A darker time is coming . . . when men will be more clever. They won't fight the truth, they'll just ignore it. I paint their comfortable Christ, with a halo over his head. How can I show what I haven't lived? Someday I might have the courage to venture, not yet. Someday I'll . . . I'll paint the true Christ."⁸

Fr. Kremer, Sophie Scholl, and Franz Jägerstätter had the courage.

About the Author: Bridget Bryan has been writing and drawing since she was ten years old. After obtaining a bachelors in Catholic General Education from St. Mary's Academy, she taught for 10 years at various SSPX schools, the majority being with middle school and junior high boys, traveling the world in the summertime. Miss Bryan currently works as a freelance artist. You can follow her work at bridgetbryan.com.

Endnotes:

¹ Philip, Fr. Jacques. *Interior Freedom*. Trans. by Helena Scott. New York, Scepter Publishers, Inc., 2007. Print.

² Dachau concentration camp interned over 2,000 Catholic priests. Their story is brought alive by *Christ in Dachau* by Rev. John M. Lenz in which he tells the story of forgotten priest-heroes. The author was himself among the survivors and was asked by his superiors to write an account of what he saw. This book I found was personally more gripping and spiritually penetrating than Fr. Jean Bernard's story.

³ Many viewers of the movie have gone on further to read *A Noble Treason, The Story of Sophie Scholl and the White Rose Revolt Against Hitler* by Richard Hanser.

⁴ Jn. 10:7-14, Jn. 14:6.

⁵ If you'd like to read more about this hero, you can find a new edition of the letters he wrote to his wife while in prison. Another book, *In Solitary Witness: The Life and Death of Franz Jägerstätter*, was written by Gordon Zahn, who, himself a Catholic, was able to interview many of those who knew Franz, including his wife, for the writing of the book.

⁶ Philip, Fr. Jacques. *Interior Freedom*. Trans. by Helena Scott. New York, Scepter Publishers, Inc., 2007. Print.

⁷ Mt. 6:22.

⁸ *A Hidden Life* (2019). Film.



Cinema and Sanctity

Pauper Peregrinus

The French philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) had a powerful but mixed influence on the life of the Church. After his conversion at a young age to the Catholic faith, he became an enthusiastic and able proponent of the “Thomistic revival” set in motion by Pope Leo XIII. He and his wife Raïssa made of their home in Meudon a center of prayer and philosophy, and a seed-bed of many vocations. Yet he would also go on to develop a political philosophy called “integral humanism,” which seemed to many an ill-fated marriage of the gospel and the Enlightenment, but which deeply influenced the future Pope Paul VI. Nevertheless, Maritain was always a profound thinker, and in a book published in his old age, he reflected on those who “think that the kingdom of God comes in noise and din,” and who imagine that mass media will henceforth be the Church’s main tools for evangelization. Such people, Maritain comments, do not realize that these media “tend by nature to

serve the illusory more than the true.” What did he have in mind? He was evoking a distinction that goes all the way back to Plato, between the appearance of a thing and its nature. I know, for example, that there are such things as dogs. I have often seen them, and heard them bark. There must be some “canine nature” that they all share, or else they would not all be dogs. But have I ever seen or heard or touched this nature? Not exactly: all that has ever directly struck my senses has been this or that color or shape or texture or sound. What’s more, all the dogs I have ever met or ever will meet have been getting older; that is, tending to become something other than dogs. Whenever my senses put me in contact with something, that thing is tending to become something else, and to that extent, it is not fully itself. “All things flow,” said an ancient philosopher.

What has all this to do with the art of cinematography? Human life is a balancing act between the intelligence (which can know the

natures of things) and the senses (which are acquainted only with their outsides). We need both, in order to steer our way, but the intelligence should be the master, and the senses the servants. This is the natural hierarchy. Whenever our senses are in charge, this hierarchy has been turned upside-down; and no one can get far, standing on his head.

This explains why Plato, though he had the soul of a poet, was wary of the arts. He understood, for example, the power of music to mold the mind of man. "It is a fearful thing for a city," he wrote in the *Republic*, "when there is a revolution in musical taste; for a revolution in morals is bound to follow." He also thought that his fellow Athenians were too much in love with their plays, which gave them, so he held, wrong notions about religion. Plato even coined the word "theatrocracy" to mean a city where the citizens draw their ideas about life, and so also their laws, from what they have seen performed on the stage.

It is not hard to imagine this father of philosophy shaking his head in dismay if he had been vouchsafed a glimpse of the first motion picture houses of the twentieth century. After all, human life seemed to him already, for most people, a matter of gazing at shadows on a wall; what a refinement, then, of futility if these shadows are themselves only images of other shadows!

Plato, of course, was only a pagan. But he often had a point. One of the consequences of the Fall of man is that the harmony between the senses, including the imagination, and the intellect has been shattered. Without grace, and a good deal of it, we are more powerfully affected by whatever touches our senses than by what appeals to the mind. This makes it hard for us to keep our feet, and easy to stand on our heads. In this respect, modern media, as Maritain realized, are more perilous than books. No doubt, books, also, communicate their message via the senses using printed words (or braille); but these words are mere messengers of ideas. Words on paper do not generally so retain the eyes of the reader nor so dominate his imagination as to leave his intellect vacant or inert.

It's different with moving images, especially when manipulated by a master craftsman. Unlike words, which are of interest only because

of the message they convey, images of things are *intrinsically* appealing to man. "Likeness is a cause of delight," wrote St Thomas Aquinas. Hence, when images are multiplied, they absorb the senses and fill up the imagination in a way that leaves the intelligence less room to act. Human beings, after all, have only a finite amount of energy, and whatever is given to one of the soul's powers leaves so much the less for the others. Thus arises the strange phenomenon that was noted by the book of Wisdom, a century or two before Christ: *The bewitching of vanity obscureth good things*. The slightly hypnotic effect produced by looking at screens has often been noticed, nor are children the only ones to suffer from it.

Does this mean that the cinemas, or movies, can have no place in the life of a Christian? That seems too strict a verdict. Man must relax sometimes, just as he must sleep. Yet from another Catholic philosopher of the 20th century, Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977), we receive this wise counsel: "Such leisure as lacks the note of true contemplation—that is, mere recreation or amusement—must not occupy more than a small fraction of our time, lest it should impart to our lives a tinge of frivolousness and effeminacy" (from his work *Transformation in Christ*, chapter 9). As the title of his book suggests, von Hildebrand is not thinking here so much about what is necessary in order to avoid sin, but about what is helpful on the road toward holiness. So what does he mean by "the note of true contemplation"?

He too is echoing Plato, albeit in a Christian key. For Plato, "contemplation," unlike sensation, means a kind of knowledge that puts us in contact with eternal truths, rather than with mere flux. Mathematics was for him an example of contemplation; so was philosophy itself. Von Hildebrand would not deny this, but he would add that looking upon *beauty* also lifts us above the flow of changing things. This is already true of the beauty of the natural world: if a tree, for example, appears to us beautiful by reason of its shape or color this is because its inner, unchanging nature—its "form"—is manifesting itself to us more fully. That is why a walk through some beautiful countryside, though it is not itself a prayer, nevertheless helps to dispose the soul to prayer. Likewise the contemplation

of some noble deed puts us in contact with eternal “values” that may otherwise remain for us mere abstract words: such as justice, chastity, or courage.

Unlike Plato, then, we need not banish all dramatists from the republic. Some should be banished, no doubt: those who provoke their viewers to cruelty, blasphemy or lust. Others can be tolerated: the makers of romances, whether in the medieval or modern sense of the word—that is, exploits of force and skill that appeal to the imagination or tales of love that excite pleasant emotions. Yet here we do well to remember von Hildebrand’s warning that that which opens no window onto eternity should occupy only a small fraction of our fleeting time. And some dramatists, of stage or screen, we may praise: those who help us realize more vividly the truths that we already hold, the truths which help us to save our souls.

Yet even the best works of cinematic art are in some way overpowering for the human imag-

ination. The mystical authors often tell us that to make progress in prayer we need to “cleanse our souls of images,” even good ones. Can anyone do this who watches much television? C. S. Lewis used to advise people who felt bound to read the daily newspapers that they should take a “palate-cleanser” afterward, perhaps in the form of a Shakespearian sonnet or of an excerpt from the writings of his friend John Tolkien. In the same way, those who are aspiring to holiness may well need to unclog their imaginations from what they see on their screens, even when these things are blameless in themselves. How can they do this? They can turn their eyes to better images: to those mysterious icons that have been handed down from ancient times, which are the true images of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin. Isn’t it by gazing upon these, that imaginations and hearts can be made pure?



The Twelve

by E. Mary Christie

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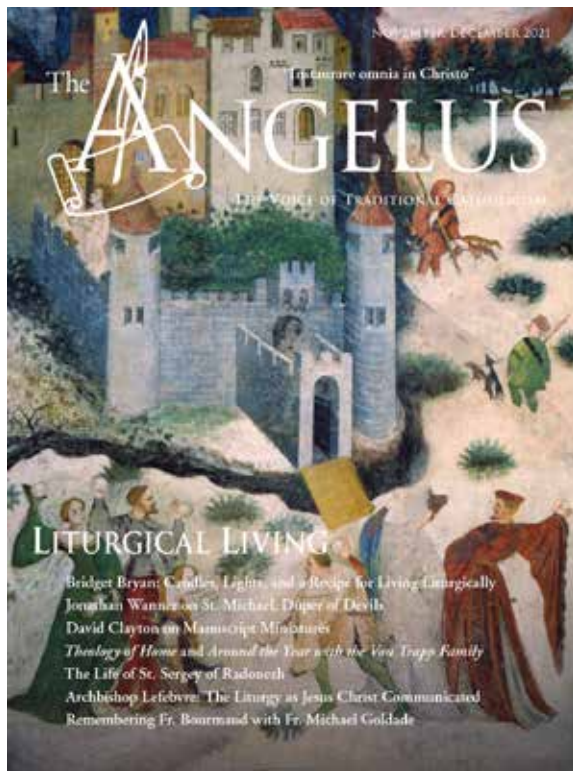
We owe so much to the twelve apostles and their lives of heroic sanctity. Not only did these twelve men shape the Mass, and the Liturgy that surrounds it, but they gave us the Sacred Traditions of the Church which we still follow and keep as an essential part of our lives today.

This delightful little book is an easy read and is perfect for anyone who wishes to learn more about the men Christ chose to lead His Church and spread His Gospels.

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Be Faith

The sermon of His Grace Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre delivered to the seminarians of Albano, Italy on their entrance into the Society of Saint Pius X on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1979.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

My dear brethren:

I would like first of all to say a few words to you on the occasion of your entrance into the Society of Saint Pius X; to try and give you some kind of definition of this Society.

I refer to St. Matthew's Gospel, where the master, in the parable of the talents, says these words, so full of significance: "*Euge, serve bone et fidelis, quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, super multa te constituam; intra in gaudium domini tui.*" "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

If the Society has one feature it is precisely that of fidelity, and I think that the Society can be defined as that which will help you to remain faithful for your personal sanctity and for the sanctification of souls. This faithfulness in the Church, faithfulness in the entire history of redemption fulfilled by Our Lord Jesus Christ, is perhaps the most essential and necessary quality. How can we define faithfulness? I think it could be said to be consistency and precision in the transmission of a message—the faithful and exact handing down of a treasure, of a testimony, and of a spiritual testimony, in

On Fidelity to Tradition ful Transmitters

Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre

particular. To be faithful, therefore, is to hand down in a precise manner that which has been put at our disposal to be handed down to future generations. And I think that this is the principal role of our Society. In these times when fidelity actually seems to be a fault, there seems to be a break in the transmission of this message: nothing is more useful to the Church and the salvation of souls than to remain faithful; in other words, to hand down faithfully the testament that Our Lord has left us.

As the Old Testament also insisted on the handing down of a message which was the coming of the Messiah, so they awaited this Messiah. Since that time it is no longer a promise which we have to transmit—it is Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and we have to hand down this admirable treasure—a treasure so extraordinary that it transcends our capabilities. It is our duty to hand down this message faithfully, in imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of St. Pius X, our patrons. If there is anyone who has handed down Our Lord Jesus Christ faithfully in this world, it is the Blessed Virgin Mary. She received Him by the grace of the Holy Ghost; she who was immaculate in her conception, which great privilege we celebrate today. Our Lord Jesus Christ was truly handed down to humanity by the Blessed Virgin Mary, until His last breath on the Cross, when she too was present; she fulfilled her role perfectly. And that is why she can truly be called *Virgo Fidelis*—Virgin most faithful. She was faithful to all the details of her duties as mother, of her duty to hand down Jesus to us for our Redemption. In the midst of the upheavals of history, in the midst of the errors which appeared right

at the beginning of this century and which had their roots in the century which came before, a Pope also arose; God gave us an admirable Pope in the person of St. Pius X, the last Pope to be canonized. St. Pius, too, was faithful; he, too, wanted to transmit the message which Our Lord entrusted to him. And he expressed it in a wonderful manner in these words, “*Instaurare omnia in Christo*”—“Restore all things in Christ.” This is the message handed down to us by Pope Saint Pius X, and with these examples before you—the Blessed’ Virgin and Pope St. Pius X—you, too, will be faithful.

THROUGHOUT YOUR YEARS at seminary, during your entire priestly formation, you will receive Our Lord Jesus Christ in your minds, your hearts, your very souls. You will learn to know Him, to deepen your knowledge of Jesus, the knowledge of the great mystery of the Christ, of which St. Paul speaks; and you, in turn, will have to pass on this knowledge, faithfully. This is what the faithful ask of us; the souls who are seeking you are seeking Our Lord Jesus Christ, they are seeking in you a genuine transmission of the Faith.

Nowadays we see transmitters on the hills, everywhere, which relay messages and pictures throughout the entire world, and which transmit them faithfully. By these transmitters, men try to relay pictures and messages as clearly as possible. We, too, are transmitters, intelligent transmitters, who tune in to the message on the wave lengths, who receive it in our minds, and who have to relay it in as faithful a manner as possible. This is what people expect from you. Let us, therefore, be like these transmitters—

In these times when fidelity actually seems to be a fault, ... nothing is more useful to the Church and the salvation of souls than to remain faithful ... to hand down faithfully the testament which Our Lord has left us ... “Restore all things in Christ.” This is the message handed down to us by Pope Saint Pius X and with these examples before you—the Blessed Virgin Mary and Pope Saint Pius X—you, too, will be faithful.

receiving the message with love and devotion and endeavoring to pass it on as exactly and perfectly as possible.

How will you transmit this message faithfully? First of all, in preparing yourselves in the silence, the recollection, the prayer, the studies of the seminary; this is how you will record the message given to you as perfectly as possible. And then, you will pass it on to the faithful by preaching the Gospel as your predecessors have done; all the priests, missionaries, bishops, and godly Popes. You will also bear witness by your example and by your attitude. The message is in a way imprinted on you so that those faithful whom you meet realize that you are bringing Our Lord Jesus Christ to them. In you, they expect and want to see the image of Jesus Christ. In each of you they want to see an *alter Christus*—another Christ: this is what you are, this is what you will be for many, and this is proven by the experiences of those already ordained. Your predecessors in the ministry are much loved, and how many times in the past few weeks, no matter where I go—Berlin, Hamburg, Vienna, Brussels—everywhere people ask me to send them our priests. Certainly, they also love the priests who have remained faithful to the teaching of Jesus Christ, faithful to their vocation, but it seems to them that this renewal which the young priests of Ecône bring, gives them confidence, a profound confidence; a feeling of security that the message continues to be passed on. Young men are continuing the transmission of this traditional message, and this is what encourages the faithful, this is what gives them confidence that the Church cannot disappear, that the Church has to continue for the salvation of souls.

These, then, are the dispositions in which I would like you, my dear seminarians, to make your entrance, in a way which will bear fruit for yourselves and will profit your future apostolate amongst the souls of the faithful.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Translated by Bernard E. Mieux
Albano, January 1980



Fr. Juan Carlos Iscara, SSPX

Is it always immoral, a sin, to use bad words?

There are distinctions to be made, so let us begin with some basic moral notions.

Morality is the relationship that a human action has with the moral law, *i.e.* with the law of God—the action may be in agreement or disagreement with the moral law, or even be totally outside its scope.

Now, in every human action we have to consider three elements in order to determine its morality, namely, the object of the act, the circumstances which surround it, and the intention with which it is performed.

The *object* is that end which is primarily and directly attained by the action (for example, the act of giving alms attains the end of relieving the need of the poor). The *circumstances* refer to

the manner, place, time, *etc.* in which that action is performed. The *intention* is the end which the person performing the action wants to attain; it may or may not coincide with the object of the action itself (for example, to give alms simply to show off, and not because one is particularly concerned by the need of another).

Each of these elements has its own relationship with the moral law. The basic morality is established by the object, but the final morality of the action has to take into consideration also the intention and circumstances (thus, for example, an action that is morally good by its object may end in being a sin because of the perverted intention of the agent. . .).

This being said, let us now consider the case of the use of bad words. But first of all, what is a “bad word”?

Words are sounds or written symbols that designate a thing, *i.e.*, they signify a notion, an

idea. They may be more or less precise in designating that thing, but—as words—they are amoral, in the sense that, by themselves, they have no relation to the moral law. Their moral malice or goodness will be given by the circumstances in which they are used and by the intention of he who uses them.

Certainly, those words that refer to sacred things—particularly the Holy Name of God—are never to be used purposely in ways that detract from the respect, the reverence due towards such high realities. In such use there may be, at least, a venial sin of irreverence.

In certain cultures, some words may have come to be considered as contrary to good manners, good taste or an educated use of language. Harmless words used in the past, common in many literary classics, have now acquired a different, offensive meaning. In certain countries some words have an added meaning which they do not have in another (for example, when I was at the seminary in Argentina, we learnt the hard way that some Spanish words we commonly and innocently used had an extremely insulting meaning in Mexico. . .).

In such cases, a morally indifferent word—a word that simply designates a real thing or an idea—has become a morally bad word. If we are aware of that shift in meaning, politeness and charity will lead us to avoid using that word so as not to give offense to our interlocutor or to scandalize the people around us.

If such a word is used with the intention of offending, threatening or causing emotional harm, then, yes, it is a sin.

But if we happen to utter such a word without reflection, without intention of offending anybody, but simply as a sudden reaction to pain or misfortune, it would not be a sin—although we should be careful to keep ourselves in better control. . .

Moreover, in certain cultures, an otherwise offensive word may be used without intention of offending anybody, but as a sign of a close, friendly relationship between speaker and listener. Likewise, in that case there is no sin.

In certain cultures, indebted to the materialistic mindset of their Protestant origins, it has become a custom to use the so-called “minced oaths,” euphemistic expressions created by altering or clipping morally offensive words

and expressions to make them less objectionable. In such cases, although the “bad” word is not pronounced, the moral malice resides in the intention of the person who uses it.

For whom can we pray?

We can and should pray not only for ourselves, but also for anyone capable of eternal glory, without excluding any specific souls: “*Pray for one another, that you may be saved*” (James 5:16). The dogma of the communion of saints guarantees us the possibility and efficacy of such prayer. Christian charity—and sometimes justice—imposes on us such obligation.

Therefore, we must pray first for all those whom we must love. Then, also for everyone capable of eternal glory, including sinners, heretics, excommunicated, *etc.*, and even our own enemies. But for all these it is enough to ask in general, without positively excluding anyone.

Ordinarily, we are not obliged to pray in particular for our enemies, although it would be an act of greater perfection. There are cases, however, in which we would be obliged to do so; for example, in the serious spiritual need of our enemy, or when he asks for forgiveness, or to avoid the scandal that would follow if we were to refuse praying for him, *etc.* We must always be ready and willing to do so, to fulfill what the Lord tells us in the Gospel: “*Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good, and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust*” (Mt. 5:44-45).

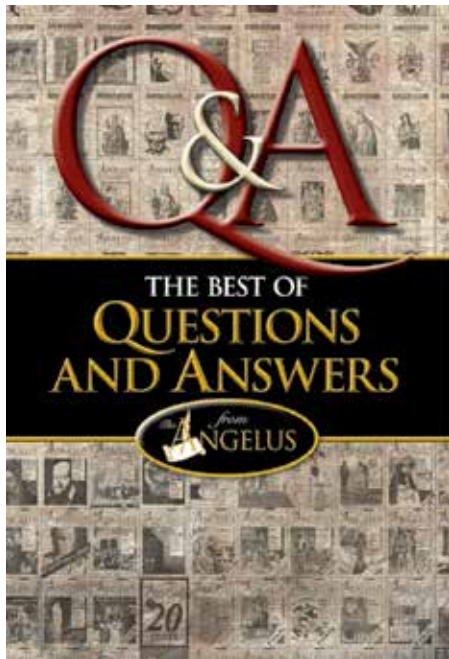
We also can and should pray for heretics and public sinners, even excommunicated ones, at least with private prayers. Concerning public prayer for them, there are special norms established by the Church, which are mainly aimed at avoiding the scandal that could arise among the faithful.

We can and must pray for the souls in Purgatory, always at least out of charity and many times out of piety (if they are family members) or out of justice (if they are there on account of us; for example, for the bad examples that we gave them).

It is a common opinion among theologians that we can ask for an increase in the acciden-

tal glory of the blessed, not that of the essential glory, which is absolutely immutable and depends on the degree of grace and charity that the soul has when separating from the body.

It is not lawful to pray for the damned, because they are completely outside the bonds of charity, which is based on the participation in eternal life. This is apart from the fact that such prayer would be completely useless and superfluous for them, as they are fixed in a state of rejection and separation from God.



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The Canon

Part Five

Fr. Christopher Danel

In this article we examine the portion of the Canon immediately following the Consecration, presenting the work of Msgr. Nicholas Gihl in his fundamental liturgical commentary *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: Dogmatically, Liturgically, and Ascetically Explained*. Msgr. Gihl was a priest of Freiburg in Breisgau whose work of liturgical research took place during the time frame spanning the pontificates of Popes Pius IX to Pius XI, including that of Pope Saint Pius X. The early years of his work were contemporaneous with the last years in the work of Dom Prosper Guéranger. (The English translation of his study appeared in 1902; the original is: Gihl, Nikolaus. *Messopfer dogmatisch, liturgisch und aszetisch erklärt*. Herder: Freiburg im Breisgau, 1877.)

The Eucharistic Sacrifice is accomplished essentially by the Consecration. But as the sacrificial action, as simple as it is sublime, was appropriately introduced and prepared by manifold rites, it must also liturgically be properly developed and worthily concluded. Hence the Church now encircles the head of the Victim reposing on the altar with a mystical wreath of holy prayers and ceremonies. At the moment of the Eucharistic Consecration there was thrown open to us on the altar an immense treasury of graces; these the Church would now gather up, and there follows an oblation prayer in three parts.

Unde et memores: Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants, and likewise Thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed Passion of the same Christ Thy Son, our Lord, together with His Resurrection from the grave, and also His glorious Ascension into heaven, offer unto Thy excellent Majesty, of Thy gifts and presents, a pure Victim, a holy Victim, an immaculate Victim: the holy bread of eternal life, and the chalice of everlasting salvation.

Supra quae: Upon which do Thou vouchsafe to look with favorable and gracious countenance, and accept them, as Thou didst vouchsafe to accept the gifts of Thy just servant Abel, and the sacrifice of our Patriarch Abraham, and that which Thy High Priest

Melchisedech offered unto Thee, a holy Sacrifice, an unspotted Victim.

Supplices te rogamus: *We humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God, command these to be carried by the hands of Thy holy Angel to Thine Altar on high, in the presence of Thy divine Majesty, that as many of us as shall, by partaking at this Altar, receive the most sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son, may be filled with all heavenly blessing and grace. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

These three parts of the Canon belong together both as to their form and their contents, for they constitute but a single prayer, which concludes with the customary clause. If the aforesaid formula of prayer be conceived and explained after this manner, then the intimate relation of the parts of the prayer and the gradual development of the whole cannot be mistaken. In general, it contains the presentation to God of our sacrificial gifts and supplication that He graciously accept them, and finally terminates with the wish that the most abundant benedictions of grace may be poured out from the altar upon all who participate in the holy sacrificial nourishment.

Unde et memores

The virginal seer St. John beheld in heaven the wonderful, meek Lamb, who triumphed in His blood, and he saw Him standing “as it were slain” (Apoc. 5:6), on account of the marks of His wounds. With far greater right we may say that the same Lamb of God after the Consecration remains in a state of sacrifice “as if immolated” on the altar. Assuredly the Lord indeed dieth no more, nor can He die; He is exalted above death and the pangs of death; but nevertheless He here submits, under the sacramental species, to a mystical death, inasmuch as He renders present and conceals His Body and His Blood under the cover of inanimate things. While He places Himself by the separate Consecration in this state on the altar, He consecrates Himself to His Heavenly Father as a sacrifice of praise, of propitiation, of thanksgiving and of petition. His Eucharistic Heart glows and burns with the same fire of sacrificial love which at one time consumed Him as a holocaust on Calvary.

But on the altar He is also our Sacrifice, He is in our hands: we are likewise to offer Him. This is done already at the Consecration; for the sacrificial act, as such, essentially includes

the oblation of the gift. The Offertory prayers previous to the Consecration do not refer to the Eucharistic elements exclusively, but at the same time to the Victim about to be present. Immediately after the Consecration again similar oblation petitions occur; they do not belong to the essence of the Sacrifice, yet they, in a certain sense, add to its greater perfection and completeness. The immolated, sacrificed Lamb of God, His Body and Blood lie before us on the altar; these infinitely precious gifts we now present to the Divine Majesty, principally to commemorate the Redeemer and His work, as well as to gain the fruits of the Sacrifice.

Supra quae

This next petition is that the heavenly Father would favorably accept this our Sacrifice as He accepted the sacrifices of Abel, Abraham, and Melchisedech. Here there is by no means a “parallel comparison” of the Eucharistic Sacrifice with those ancient sacrifices before Christ; there is an infinite distance between them in as far as Christ Himself is its priest and victim. The comparison therefore refers to us and to those devout patriarchs. We pray that our oblation may be agreeable and pleasing to the eyes of God, as were the sacrifices of those saints of ancient times. When holy men such as Abel, Abraham, and Melchisedech offered sacrifices of pleasing odor to God, the Lord accepted their gifts with so great satisfaction because they were presented to Him with perfect dispositions and because they at the same time prefigured the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

There is no doubt with respect to the character of those sacrifices as “types.” If the sacrifices of Abel and Abraham are assuredly principally figures of the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross, they must, indeed, in this connection with Melchisedech’s sacrifice, be also considered as figures of the unbloody Sacrifice of the Altar. Such a conception corresponds to the view of Christian antiquity, as it is often expressed by the Fathers, in liturgies and in images.

The simple, devout and faithful Abel offered a lamb to the Lord, and this sacrifice is intended to prefigure the Sacrifice of that true and immaculate Lamb, daily immolated on the altar. Abraham stands forth prominently as an example of heroic obedience and faith; chosen by God as the first father of all the faithful. God commanded him to immolate his son Isaac in

sacrifice, and Abraham had already bound his long-desired child of promise, placed him on the pile of wood, and had raised the sword above him: but at the decisive moment, the Almighty restrained the father's arm and instead of the son allowed him to sacrifice a ram to Him. This sacrifice of Abraham is often represented in the Catacombs, together with other biblical events symbolizing the priesthood and the Sacrifice of the New Law, as a figure of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The Sequence of Corpus Christi places the sacrifice of Abraham on a par with the Manna and the Paschal Lamb, for it declares that the Eucharist "was figuratively announced by the sacrifice of Isaac."

The sacrifice of bread and wine which the faithful and royal priest Melchisedech presented to the Most High, is the most luminous and most striking figure of the Eucharistic Sacrifice; for this reason it is justly styled holy and spotless. Melchisedech himself is called *summus sacerdos*; his priesthood as to dignity and importance is in nowise inferior to that of Aaron, but it is even superior to it, because he is indeed a figure of the eternal High Priest Jesus Christ.

Supplices te rogamus

This part contains the concluding petition by which we beseech God to command our sacrificial gifts to be carried by the hands of the angels to His altar on high. This petition is mystical in character. It is a tradition originating in ancient Christian times and frequently expressed by the Church, that the angels who participated in the work of redemption from beginning to end, are also present at and take part in the celebration of the holy Sacrificial Mysteries. As St. John Chrysostom says, "The priest is himself at that solemn moment surrounded by angels, and the choir of the heavenly Powers unite with him; they occupy the entire space around the altar, to honor Him who lies there as a Sacrifice" (Of the Priesthood VI, 4). Then the Saint describes a vision, in which was seen a multitude of angels,

who, robed in dazzling white garments and with head deeply bowed, surrounded the altar, as warriors standing in the presence of their king.

The altar in the Holy of Holies in heaven is, however, not a material place of sacrifice, but it symbolizes the heavenly sacrifice, that is, the sweet-scented incense of praise, homage and thanksgiving, which the Church glorified in union with her glorified Head Jesus Christ offers always and eternally to the triune God.

The biblical expression of carrying the oblation of our altar to the heavenly altar accordingly designates the union of our earthly Sacrifice with the heavenly Sacrifice of the Church Triumphant. But as the latter is always in the presence of the Divine Majesty, that is, is indescribably pleasing and agreeable in the sight of God, so will our offering also, supported and recommended by its union with the precious Sacrifice of heaven and through the ministration of the angels, be admitted into the presence of God and be favorably received by Him.

Pope St. Gregory the Great

wrote, "What believing soul can doubt that at the hour of the Sacrifice, upon the word of the priest, heaven opens and that choirs of angels assist at this mystery of Jesus Christ, that here the highest is combined with the lowest, the earthly united with the heavenly, the visible and invisible become one?" (Dial. IV, 58).

The Signs of the Cross

Even after the Consecration, during these prayers, the sign of the Cross is made over the sacrificial gifts. The use of the sign of the Cross in ecclesiastical worship is very extensive; it is employed not only as a holy symbol to express various mysteries and truths, but also as a means to produce supernatural effects and to impart blessings. Since the sign of the Cross is so extensively employed for liturgical purposes on account of its manifold and profound contents, it is self-evident that it is not always and everywhere used in the same sense, but at one time in one sense, at another in another,

The sign of the
Cross possesses
the form and
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and death.



and even often in the same place it may have several meanings consistent with one another.

Thus, the distinction between the sign of the Cross made before and that made after the Consecration must be shown. Very often the Cross is a sign of blessing: this is the case before the Consecration. There it is a significant and, at the same time, an effective sign of blessing; on the one hand, it consecrates the material elements of bread and wine to their high destiny, and, on the other hand, it indicates and implores their perfect sanctification through the Consecration. But evidently this object cannot be ascribed to the sign of the Cross after the Elevation: there are no longer present on the altar material elements susceptible of or in need of blessing, but Christ's Body and Blood under the appearances of bread and wine. The signs of the Cross after the Consecration therefore have different meanings and ends.

The sign of the Cross possesses the form and expression of a holy image: it ever reminds us of Christ's passion and death. When the species of the Eucharistic Sacrifice are named, the symbol of the Cross is appropriately added thereto, to

represent that on the altar the same Body and the same Blood are offered as were once sacrificed on the Cross.

This symbolic interpretation does not exclude but rather includes other meanings. If the signs of the Cross figuratively express what the words signify, then they are also rightly to be conceived as a symbolic dedication and surrendering up to God of the Eucharistic Victim. Yet these crosses in a certain respect can here be understood as signs of blessing. However, as Bossuet asserts, the blessings made over the body of Jesus Christ with the sign of the cross do not and cannot add any further blessing to His divine body, but indicate the blessings and graces wherewith that divine body is filled, and which He desires to impart to us abundantly. The sign of the cross may therefore be regarded as a symbol of that plenitude of grace and blessing which gushes forth from the sacrificed Body and Blood of Christ over His mystical body, that is, the Church.

The rubrics are in most exquisite harmony with the tenor of the prayer. According to a very ancient rubric the priest pronounces the petition of the principal clause with a profound inclination of the body, to indicate the humility and fervor with which he implores of Almighty God such sacred things. Before the words "by partaking at this altar," the priest kisses the altar so as to unite himself with the Sacrificial Lamb whom he sends up to heaven. He then stands erect and, at the words "Body and Blood," he makes the sign of the Cross over the oblation to indicate that *by and through the Cross* the plenitude of all heavenly blessing and grace flows to us. By the act of signing himself with the Cross at the end, he would apply the abundant, overflowing benediction of the altar to himself and to the congregation. That the Sacrifice ascends from earth to heaven, and the blessing of Heaven descends upon us, we are indebted to the one only fountain of all grace, to our one and perfect Mediator between Heaven and earth; hence the petition concludes with the words "Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

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Meditations on St. John's Gospel

Chapter Eleven

Pater Inutilis

Jesus therefore went beyond the Jordan (10:40) where there was a Bethany, scene of John's baptizing (1:28). There was in Palestine another Bethany, home to Lazarus, Martha, and Mary near Jerusalem. From the latter the sisters send word to Jesus of their sick brother. There has been much question about this Mary of Bethany: is she the same as the "woman that was in the city, a sinner" (Lk. 7:37); and are either or both to be identified with Mary Magdalen¹ (19:25; 20:11; 20:11-18)? Following St. John Chrysostom, a good number cannot accept that one who had been such a sinner could be allowed into the company of Christ's intimates, as obviously Mary of Bethany was—"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus." He willingly stayed at her place (Mt. 21:17). And yet, St. John seems to want to make it clear about whom he is speaking when he clarifies: "And Mary was she that anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair." This more naturally is to be taken of

a past event, argues St. Augustine, which would have to be the anointing by the sinful woman of Luke VII, this Mary of John XI having yet so to do (12:3); if more than one woman did it, the anointing could not clearly specify just one woman; and the gesture of Mary's anointing (12:3) becomes less understandable if it be not the expression of ardent and grateful love in remembrance of Jesus' loving mercy.

St. Augustine, and after him so many grateful repentant sinners, had no trouble in accepting Jesus' tender love for the returned Prodigal, the Lost Sheep found,² that was the sinner in the city. That Mary Magdalen is to be identified also with the sinful woman is to be understood by being the one "out of whom he had cast seven devils" (Mk. 16:9; Lk. 8:2), *i.e.*, one who had been full of wickedness.³ We note too that Mary of Bethany's anointing would be for Jesus' burial (12:7), counting for what Mary Magdalen would not be able to do later (Mk. 16:1). The Roman Liturgy, for its part, clearly identifies

them in the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, Penitent, July 22.

We note too the touching prayer of the sisters—for a prayer it is—“Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.” It is a prayer merely of presenting one’s need, as His Mother’s “They have no wine” (2:3). A prayer of trust in His love and faith in His power to aid, by miracle, if needs be. The faith of Martha and Mary, though, has not the perfection of Our Lady’s, being more like that, gently rebuked, of the ruler of Capharnaum, in that he thought Our Lord would have to be in the presence of his servant to heal him (4:47-49). After their brother’s death, each of his sisters complains: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”

Jesus, though, delayed His coming back to Judea that Lazarus’ death be the more certain, it being the fourth day after that that the Lord comes, and so that the miracle be the more convincing. Jesus will use this occasion to reaffirm what has already been repeatedly stated: “I am the resurrection and the life.”⁴ This we must believe, as had to by now the witnesses to Our Lord’s teachings and miracles. “Believeth thou this?” he asks of Martha. The Apostles too are to believe; many among the Jews of the crowd do also believe—but not all. The time has definitely come to decide for or against Jesus Christ. Even those who decide against Him cannot deny His miracles now. They are hard-hearted, they sin against the light and blind themselves. “They loved the glory of men more than the glory of God” (12:43), St. John will later explain. What was their reaction after the glorious raising to life of Lazarus? To assemble the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the priests, doctors of the law and elders⁵—where the Chief Priest counsels having Jesus put to death, a motion adopted by the Council and acted upon in seeking His arrest. This Caiphas “who had given the counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people” (18:14) will himself be Jesus’ judge and prosecutor.⁶ Caiphas’ words, to get the Council to call for Jesus’ death, “It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (11:50), have quite another, more sublime meaning, wanted by the Holy Ghost. “He prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation; and not only for the nation, but to

gather together in one the children of God that were dispersed” (11:51f). God uses this sinner, a High Priest of the Old Law, to prophesy, we might say, as He can still sanctify through an unworthy priest of the New Law.

This great sign of Jesus’ was “for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it” (11:4). “Did not I say to thee, that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?” (11:40). So this sign will be very public, despite the fact that His death had already been sought (11:8); and for the sake of those standing about, that they may believe (11:42), He prays His Father out loud: “Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always. . .” (11:41f). Then, with a command reaching the Limbo of the Fathers, authoritatively He says: “Lazarus, come forth” (11:43), which he does.

And yet we see in this chapter Our Lord being very human too. It begins with Him “hiding” Himself from His enemies, being “beyond the Jordan” (10:40), and closes with Him again withdrawing Himself, this time “into a country near the desert, unto a city that is called Ephrem” (11:54). He loves with a human heart (11:5 & 36); the sight of Martha and Mary weeping causes Him to shed tears too (11:35); He groans in spirit and troubles Himself (11:33). His passions were as real for Him as ours are for us: but He had complete dominion over His. Son of man He was, but Son of God always (11:4). May Martha’s profession of faith be wholeheartedly ours: “Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art the Christ the Son of the living God, who art come into this world” (11:27).

Pater Inutilis is a priest of the Society of Saint Pius X.

Endnotes:

- ¹ Magdalen, *i.e.*, “of Magdala,” a town in Galilee on Lake Genesareth.
- ² Lk. XV. Our Lord took a Publican to be an Apostle (Mt. 10:3), a thief to be with Him in paradise (Lk. 23:43), *etc.*
- ³ Other explanations: she had been actually possessed; she had suffered much (20th century exegetes).
- ⁴ 5:21, 25; 6:39, 40, 44, 55; 10:10, 28.
- ⁵ Cf. “The ancients of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together; and they brought him into their council” (Lk. 22:66).
- ⁶ Cf. Mk. 14:53-64.

Our Lady of Laus

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Nestled in the southern French Alps lies the small farming village of St. Saint-Etienne d'Avançon. On September 16, 1647, Benoite [Benedicta] Rencurel was born—the second of three girls—to very poor parents. When Benoite was only seven years old, her father passed away leaving her family in even deeper poverty with debtors seeking payments. Their family was in such poverty that some days they only had stale bread and water to eat. In order to maintain the family, all the children had to work outside the home. Even so, while there was no time for her to be educated at school, Benoite's mother was conscientious of teaching her to pray the rosary and to pray at all times. Although high spirited, she was a contemplative soul and enjoyed praying for long periods of time. Her family was faithful in going to Mass and so she was taught through the Sunday homilies and learned about Mary, Mother of God. This par-

ticular dogma fascinated the young girl and she spent long periods of time contemplating this mystery while tending the sheep in the fields during the day. This contemplation led to a desire to see Our Lady.

During these years of economic crisis, young Benoite began to work as a shepherdess for a neighbor. There is a story that during these years there were men of bad reputation who were heading towards the house, one of whom tried to approach her offering her money for her purity. She fought him off and fled to warn her mother of the approach of the men. When Benoite was 12 years old, her family's financial situation grew even more desperate so she took another job shepherding a second neighbor's flock of sheep.

When Benoite was 17 years old, she was shepherding the flocks in the field when she saw an old man dressed in the vestments of a bishop of the early Church before her. He asked her: —“My daughter, what are you doing here?”

–“I’m watching my sheep, praying to God, and looking for water to drink.”

–“I’ll get some for you,” replied the man as he went to a well that Benoite had not seen.

–“You’re so beautiful!” she said. “Are you an angel or Jesus?”

–“I am Maurice, to whom the nearby chapel is dedicated . . . My daughter, do not come back to this place. It is part of a different territory, and the guards would take your flock if they found it here. Go to the valley above Saint-Étienne. That is where you will see the Mother of God.”

–“But Sir, She is in Heaven. How can I see Her there?”

–“Yes, She is in Heaven, and on earth too when She wants.”

The man disappeared, but the next day Benoite did as he told her to and took the sheep to a different field. She was praying a rosary when she saw a resplendent lady holding the hand of a beautiful child standing on a rock. “Beautiful Lady!” she exclaimed. “What are you doing up there? Do you want to eat with me? I have some good bread which we can soften up at the fountain.” This simplicity made Our Lady smile, but she remained silent. Benoite persisted, saying, “Beautiful Lady! Could you give us that child? He would make us so happy.” She smiled again, allowed her to hold him, and then disappeared.

She continued to see Our Lady in the fields as she shepherded her sheep there each day for four months. Our Lady corrected her vivaciousness and her abruptness, her stubbornness and her attachment to things and animals. She

taught her the Litany of Loreto by having her repeat what she said, word by word. She had taken Benoite as her student. One day she even invited Benoite to rest beside her and allowed her to sleep on the hem of her mantle. During this time, Benoite had told her employer about the apparitions, but she didn’t believe her. One day, she followed young Benoite out to the field and was not able to see Our Lady, but was able to hear her words. During this apparition, Our Lady asked Benoite to warn her employer about the dangers her soul was facing: “Her conscience is in a poor state. She must repent!” Upon hearing these words, her employer did return to a Christian life—she returned to the sacraments and repented of her sins.

On August 29, 1664, Benoite asked for Our Lady’s name. She responded by saying, “My name is Lady Mary.” She also told Benoite that she would stop coming to see her for a while, which saddened Benoite. Yet almost a month later, at the end of September, she sensed that Our Lady was near and rushed toward her. She actually had to ride one of the goats she was tending to cross a river that she was not able to wade through herself. Our Lady then told her that if she wanted to continue to see her, she would have to go to the little chapel in Laus. She searched the next day for a long time to find the little chapel. She knew she had found it when she smelled the sweet smell of flowers and saw the door open. When she arrived, she was thrilled to see Our Lady again waiting for her, but was embarrassed at how dirty and poor the chapel was. She offered her apron for Our



Tableaus 3, 4, and 6 inside the Basilica of Notre Dame du Laus: St. Maurice appears to Benoite Rencurel; Apparition of Our Lady to Benoite at the Valley of the Kilns; Our Lady appears to Benoite in the Chapel of Good Encounter at Laus.

Lady to stand on, but Our Lady assured her that soon the chapel would be well adorned. She asked that a church be built in her honor and promised that many sinners would be converted there.

Although it was nearly a three-mile walk to the chapel, Benoitte went frequently to the chapel during the winter of 1664-1665. Over the next few months, the message of Our Lady of Laus began to be clarified. She asked Benoitte “to pray continuously for sinners.” News of the apparitions began to spread throughout the region and pilgrims began coming to the little chapel.

As the notoriety of the apparitions grew and more people began to make pilgrimages to the little chapel in Laus, people became quite divided regarding the authenticity of the apparitions. The Vicar General of the Diocese of Gap, Fr. Pierre Gaillard was fully supportive, but wrote to Father Antoine Lambert, the Vicar General of the Diocese of Embrun, in whose territory the chapel fell. Fr. Lambert was very unsympathetic to the apparitions. On September 14, 1665, he traveled to Laus to meet with Benoitte and prove that the apparitions were a hoax. Benoitte was frightened, but Our Lady told her, “No, My daughter, you must not run away. You must remain, for you must do justice to churchmen. They will question you one by one and try to catch you with your own words. But don’t be afraid. Tell the Vicar General that he can very well make God come down from Heaven by the power he received when he became a priest, but he has no commands to give the Mother of God.”

As the questioning began, Fr. Lambert and the priests who had accompanied him began to ask her questions trying to get her to go back on her word, but she was clear and articulate. Even so, he was convinced of the falsity of the apparitions and threatened to close down the chapel. In response, she spoke to him as Our Lady had told her. Surprised, Fr. Lambert relented by saying that he needed a miracle to be convinced.

Inclement weather prevented him and his companions from leaving Laus that night, so they stayed for another two days. There happened to be a woman in town with a nerve condition that caused her feet to bend backwards to touch her lower back. She had come to the chapel seeking healing through a novena to Our Lady. The night the novena ended, she felt her

legs relax—she had been cured. The next morning she entered the chapel on her own while Fr. Lambert was saying Mass. The miracle shocked everyone, including the Vicar. He wrote up the report of the miracle himself saying, “There is something extraordinary occurring in that chapel. Yes, the hand of God is there!” He thus gave permission for the construction of the church that Our Lady had requested.

During the following winter, the winter of 1665, Our Lady instructed Benoitte to use the oil from the sanctuary lamp to anoint those who came to Laus seeking healing and if they apply it with faith and recourse to her, they would be healed. Indeed, numerous reports of miracles and healing were reported—61 cures in the following months.

Our Lady was also making known that Laus be a place of conversion having told Benoitte that “I asked my Son for Laus for the conversion of sinners, and He granted it to me.” While Benoitte had already been sacrificing and praying for sinners, Our Lady now asked her to exhort sinners to go to confession. This was tremendously difficult for Benoitte, seeing herself as too unworthy and not being convinced that Our Lady had asked her to do it since she had asked so gently. She describes this saying, “The Mother of God commands me to do it in such a mild manner that I don’t believe She absolutely wants it. And when I fail, my good Mother corrects me without getting angry. So because of the shame I feel on admonishing others, I often wait for a second command, and then I obey.” Our Lady encouraged and admonished her saying, “Take heart, My daughter! Have patience . . . Do your duty cheerfully . . . Bear no hatred towards the enemies of Laus . . . Do not be troubled and sick over it if people do not profit from your advice . . . Do not be disturbed by temptations, visible or invisible spirits, or temporal affairs . . . Strive never to forsake the presence of God, for whoever has any faith will not dare to offend Him.”

Our Lady specifically asked Benoitte to encourage the conversion of women leading impure lives and those who had had abortions. She instructed the visionary to also encourage priests who ministered at the shrine to welcome sinners and pilgrims with charity and warmth. For this reason, Our Lady of Laus became known as the Refuge of Sinners and a place of reconciliation.

To further this grace she was bestowing



Painting of the apparition of Our Lady of Laus to Benoite Rencurel in a chapel of the Basilica; Chapel of the Precious Blood at the shrine; altar of the Chapel of Good Encounter in the Basilica.

through her maternal presence at this shrine, she granted Benoite the gift of reading souls which Our Lady encouraged her to use to help people truly recognize their sins. She found it most difficult to reproach the souls that Our Lady asked her to, but when she delayed in her task, Our Lady delayed her visits. She helped them see sins or faults they may not have even been conscious of. Yet, because she was so kind, most people she encountered were very grateful and resolved to amend their lives. She not only had to guide the pilgrims who came so they could truly cleanse their consciences, but she also had to be quite demanding on the priests themselves who ministered to them. She often saw the state of their soul while they celebrated Mass—either surrounded in light or tarnished—and she would warn those whom she saw as “tarnished.”

She warned them about holding grudges, their imprudence in their questions when hearing confessions, and their negligence in their duties. She required from everyone simplicity and purity of soul, humility, and a firm will to improve.

In 1668, Benoite moved to a little house near the shrine so she wouldn't have to walk the five kilometers from her house to the shrine each day—the path she had been walking already for four years.

Beginning in 1672, a twenty-year period of great persecution against Benoite and the apparitions at Laus began. After many of the priests who had supported her, especially Fr. Lambert

who had been the Vicar of the diocese, passed away, other priests in positions of authority who denied the authenticity of the apparitions took advantage of the opportunity. A sign was soon posted on the door of the shrine forbidding that Mass be celebrated or that any public devotion take place there. Our Lady told Benoite “Remove that paper . . . and let Mass be said here as it was before.” She was obeyed. It was also during this time that Benoite was kept under house arrest for 15 years, only being permitted to attend Sunday Mass. Benoite was even threatened with excommunication along with any priest who celebrated Mass in the chapel.

Between 1669 and 1679, Benoite also received five visions of Christ Crucified. On one of these occasions, July 7, 1673, Christ told her, “My daughter, I am showing Myself to you in this condition so that you may participate in the sorrows of My Passion.” From that moment on, every Thursday evening through Saturday morning for 15 years, she experienced in her own body the Passion and Crucifixion of Our Lord. This caused further ridicule and suspicion from those who were already critical of her and the apparitions. This agony ceased only from 1677-1679 when she was serving food to the workers who were building the house for priests that Our Lady had requested, though they resumed again in November, 1679. Yet while this experience attracted the ridicules of some, it also attracted the veneration of others which was equally as painful for her humility. She pleaded with the Blessed Mother, “May my

sufferings be even more cruel if such is God's good pleasure, but let them be less visible!" The Blessed Virgin appeared to her the following Saturday and responded to her petition, "You will no longer have the Friday sufferings, but you will have many others."

In July of 1692, everyone who assisted at the shrine, including Benoite, and much of the population around Laus had to flee because of the invasion of the Duke of Savoy. Upon their return, the bishop appointed two priests who were highly suspicious of the apparitions and were less than zealous for souls—not embodying the charity that Our Lady requested towards sinners and penitents. They even preached on the falsity of the apparitions from the pulpit.

During this period as well, she suffered many attacks of the devil. Among these attacks were strong temptations against trust in God and chastity and even physical attacks against her person. False "visionaries" also arose to contradict what Our Lady was trying to accomplish through her apparitions in Laus. One day the devil revealed the reason for his anger and his incessant attacks exclaiming, "She is the reason I am losing so many souls." She remained faithful despite the attacks and temptations of the enemy.

Finally in 1712, the bishop came around and entrusted the pilgrims flocking to the shrine to the care of a community of priests, the Pères Gardistes, who were described as "a deeply religious group of sound doctrine, moved by an ardent desire for the apostolate." They endeavored to meet Our Lady's request, bringing the pilgrims to the intercession of Our Lady and the devotion to the Sacred Heart which was beginning to be propagated. Even with the pilgrims now in good hands, Benoite still suffered the torments of the devil through which she remained faithful to Our Lady. For a moment when Our Lady stopped visiting for a period to purify her, Satan cried out, "She has forsaken you . . . You will no longer have any recourse but in me!" Benoite replied, "Oh, I would rather die a thousand times forsaken by Mary, than forsake Her for a single moment!"

The apparitions would continue for the rest of Benoite's life—for almost 54 years. Six years after the arrival of the Pères Gardistes at the shrine, Benoite fell ill and was bedridden with a very high fever. On Christmas Day of 1718, she asked to receive Holy Viaticum and asked

for forgiveness for any bad example she may have given during her life, at which moment Our Lady appeared again leaving a sweet scent in the room. Three days later, she received the last rites at 3:00 pm. The priests who had been serving in the shrine for the last six years were begging the Lord for "two years more" with her, but she knew her time to return home had come. The priests asked for her blessing as her sons, she hesitated in her humility, but then ceded, saying, "It is up to our good Mother to bless you," she said while she raised her hand from her bed, not wanting to refuse them this consolation, and she said to them, "I give it to you most willingly, good Fathers."

She said goodbye calmly, seeming quite happy and not experiencing agony. At around 8:00 pm, she asked her goddaughter to pray the Litany of the Child Jesus and she passed away quietly at the age of 71.

Today, the shrine itself was raised to the status of a minor basilica by Pope Leo XIII on March 18, 1893, and attracts 120,000 pilgrims each year. Confession is offered for seven hours each day. One of the emphases of the shrine is reconciliation with God, with oneself, and with others. On May 4, 2008, the authenticity of the apparitions were officially recognized by the Church during a Mass celebrated by Bishop Jean-Michel de Falco of Gap with Cardinals and representatives of the Vatican. A year later, on April 3, 2009, H.H. Benedict XVI recognized the heroic virtue of Benoite Rencurel proclaiming her "Venerable."

Our Lady of Laus and St. Peter Julian Eymard

The spiritual fruitfulness of the apparitions of Our Lady at Laus can be seen in the lives of several saints including St. Eugene de Mazenod, St. Peter Julian Eymard and the well-known author, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Chautard. St. Peter Julian Eymard, the founder of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers and Servants, was born between Lourdes and Laus in 1865 and frequently made pilgrimages to these shrines. After much effort in trying to convince his parents to allow him to make the 50-kilometer (~30 mile) pilgrimage by foot to Our Lady of Laus, they finally granted him permission. He was 11 years old and went for nine days in order to prepare himself for his First Holy Communion. He later acknowledged



St. Peter Julian Eymard

that it was here that he first encountered the love of Our Lady.

Later, he returned after he had just spoken with his father about his vocation to the priesthood. His father had refused to give his permission which devastated young Peter. With this in mind, he traveled to Laus.

Upon his arrival, he bared his heart out to Our Lady, unburdening his sorrows and seeking her guidance in following his vocation to the priesthood. She responded to him through a priest, Fr. Touche, who became a lifelong friend and mentor. He asked Peter to tell him his problem and how he could help. He encouraged Peter to continue to pursue his vocation and remain determined. Years later, he would return to the shrine to thank Our Lady for softening his father's heart—he did eventually grant him permission to enter the priesthood.

There is also a story of St. Peter Julian Eymard later in life when his sister fell gravely ill and was vomiting constantly and had a high fever. He had recourse to Our Lady of Laus, journeying to the shrine to obtain the miraculous oil from the sanctuary lamp in the chapel. Upon his return, he invoked Benoite and Our Lady of Laus with the intention of making a novena as he made a cross on the stomach of

his sister with the oil. By that evening, his sister had stopped vomiting and continued to improve until she was completely healed.

At the end of his life, St. Peter Julian Eymard desired to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes and Laus again, thanking Our Lady. He arrived at Lourdes, but then fell too ill to journey to Laus. He returned home where he soon passed away not having been able to fulfill his desire of returning to Laus.

Benoite's Relationship with Her Guardian Angel

Benoite had a special relationship with her guardian angel, to whom she confided all her pain and troubles and with whom she constantly consulted for guidance. In turn, he responded to her trust and simplicity accordingly with services. She learned the uses of various plants from him, he helped her to clean the chapel. One night she had forgotten her thin shawl in the forest and she was suffering with the cold of the night, so he went to get it for her. He often opened the church door for her and prayed the rosary with her. Because of this intimate relationship, he was also free to correct her when needed. There was a time when someone had given her a beautiful rosary to which she became overly attached. Because of this attachment, her angel confiscated it from her and did not return it for a long time. He also taught her other valuable lessons about the spiritual life, such as that "When a person is joyful, everything he does is pleasing to God. When a person becomes angry, he does nothing that pleases Him."

In the midst of her trials and sufferings, Benoite's guardian angel was a source of great comfort to her. Even in the midst of the worst sufferings, Our Lady continued to appear to her as did her guardian angel. When the devotion to Our Lady of Laus was being suppressed, he encouraged her saying, "The Laus devotion is the work of God which neither man nor the devil can destroy. It will continue until the end of the world, flourishing more and more and bearing great fruit everywhere." He also gave her a glimpse of what was to come when he said that, "There will always be troubles at Laus until there are Religious established here." And sure enough, as soon as the order of priests took over the ministry of the shrine, things began to improve.

Her guardian angel also tried to comfort Benoitte when she was so distraught at witnessing the sufferings of Our Lord during the visions she received. He said to her, “Do not be troubled, my Sister. Although our Divine Master has appeared to you in this condition, He is not suffering anything; it is solely to show you what He suffered out of love for the human race.” Yet she was still horrified that he had suffered so much on account of our sins.

The Oil of Laus, Source of Graces

In the basilica, near the altar of the Chapel of Bon-Rencontre where Our Lady appeared to Benoitte, a lamp burns continuously, fueled by oil, to indicate the real presence of Jesus in the tabernacle.

“The good Mother said to Benoitte, at the beginning of the devotion, that the oil of the chapel, if we take it and apply it, if we have recourse to her intercession and if we have faith, that we will be healed” (Pierre Gaillard, Vicar

General of the diocese of Gap, contemporary of Benoitte).

Our Lady requests that we make an act of faith and trust in God with the help of this ordinary oil which burned before the Eucharistic presence of Jesus. Through this gesture of prayer, we express our requests to the Lord, via the Virgin Mary. The anointing helps us to open our heart to the action of the Holy Spirit to receive, in response to our prayer, the visible or hidden graces of spiritual or physical healing that the Lord wants to grant us in His love.

The sanctuary receives numerous testimonies from people affirming that they have been relieved in their pain, sometimes cured of their physical, moral and spiritual miseries, after having prayed and used oil from the lamp of the sanctuary.

Laus Oil can be obtained on request from the shrine’s website:

www.sanctuaire-notredamedulaus.com/recevoir-lhuile-du-laus



Statue of the Virgin Mary and Benoitte Rencurel on the promontory of Pindreau, in cast iron manufactured by the artistic union of Vaucouleurs in 1926.



THE LAST WORD

Fr. David Sherry
District Superior of Canada

Dear Reader,

Once a quarter, the “Restored Church of God” out of Wadsworth, Ohio sends me a copy of their magisterial magazine *The Real Truth*. The mailing label informs me that I am the second of eight subscribers in Quebec; it doesn’t tell me how I ended up on the distribution list. The glossy paper, the beautiful pictures and the layout would rival—were such a thing possible—even that of the *Angelus*. Inside, however, it turns out that the “real truth” is simply the world vision of Pastor General David C. Pack as guided by his personal interpretation of the Bible. Does hell exist? No. Are the coronavirus vaccines the mark of the beast? No. Is there only one true Church? Yes! (It is the *Restored Church of God*, which was known as the *Radio Church of God* until 1968.)

Which is a parable for movies, and entertainment of all sorts. The actors are impossibly beautiful, the cinematography is unparalleled, and the special effects are out of this world. But on the inside? Is it the truth, or is it simply the worldview of charlatans? Just as the Catholic applies the test of the Faith to the contentions of Protestants, so he must apply it to works of art.

There are three types of movies that all Christians should eschew: if they glorify sin, are an occasion of sin, or if they are graphically violent. Glorifying sin means that the message of the movie is that sin is good, or at least desir-

able and beneficial. This is the lie of Satan: sin is good for you! These movies corrupt the mind and the will. Being an occasion of sin, means that the movie is actually apt to lead the person into actual sin. This is the case with immodesty and impurity. Graphic violence makes a movie bad in a different way. It makes our imagination used to what it should not be used to. Our imagination does not know the difference between right and wrong nor between truth and falsehood. If you doubt that, consider horror movies. People, knowing they are not true, watch them because they have the thrill of feeling scared. Graphic violence is not theatrical violence, but extremely realistic bloody and gory violence.

Puritans will say: movies are bad. Period. Catholics will say: it depends. Just compare *The Real Truth* to *The Angelus*. . .

Fr. David Sherry

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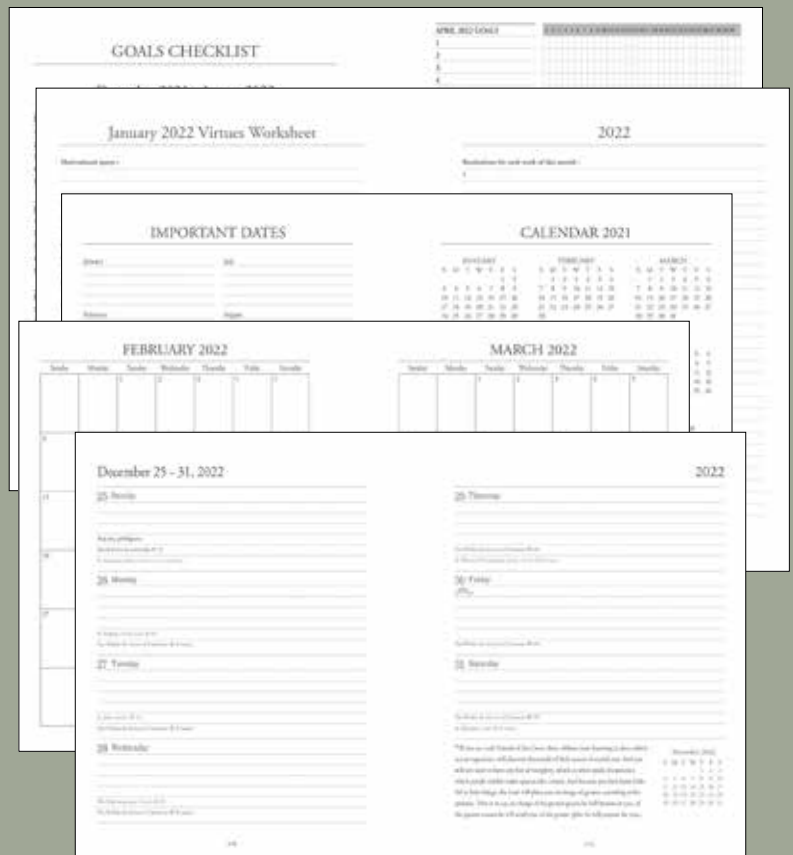
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