



Scene from "Abandon Ship." In front center are Tyrone Power and Mal Zetterling.

Students Dissect Films In Unique Theology 'Lab'

St. Louis — What can a 10-year-old Tyrone Power movie possibly contribute to a college course in moral theology?

Juniors and seniors at Maryville College of the Sacred Heart recently found out in a unique theology "lab" period, when they saw and dissected "Abandon Ship" — a film about the life-and-death decisions that must be made when a lifeboat is loaded down with too many people.

"Abandon Ship" deals with one of the classic moral problems discussed in Freshman Ethics," observed "America" magazine when the film was first released in 1937. However, not until Mother Katharine Hargrove launched an experimental theology course this year has anyone attempted to incorporate such a film into a college theology curriculum.

Since September, Maryville's theology students have not only seen and discussed "Abandon Ship" but they also have had, or soon will have, "lab" sessions with "Dark Victory," "Nights of Cabiria," "Death of a Salesman," "Raisin in the Sun," "Parable," "Through a Glass," "Darkly," "The Last Bridge," "The Last Angry Man" and "Suddenly, Last Summer."

Mother Hargrove is conducting the experimental course with three groups of 15 students each. They meet twice a week for a 50-minute lecture by Mother Hargrove, followed by a 25-minute discussion; then at a third meeting they view and discuss a film that the nun believes will illuminate a point.

"Abandon Ship" was the first film she selected for showing and discussion, because, she said, it is an "easy" film and one that can be used to discuss a number of moral problems, among them: survival of the fittest, abortion and nuclear warfare.

The film stars Tyrone Power as an officer of a luxury liner which is struck by a derelict mine in the South Atlantic and sinks. Power and 26 others escape in a lifeboat that has been built for 14 at most. With food and water at a minimum and a storm brewing, a dying officer (Lloyd Nolan) warns Power that he must jettison the weak and injured survivors in order to save the rest. After much debate among the survivors, Power decides that this is the only course and, sometimes at the point of a gun, puts about a dozen persons overboard with only their lifejackets and the hope that they might be picked up before they die.

Among those he must put over the side are an 18-year-old boy, an opera singer and playwright, while a gangster is kept. When the survivors ride out the storm, Power is praised for his moral courage but as soon as they are rescued some of the survivors accuse him of murder. Power is brought to trial — and acquitted.

In the Maryville discussion, the girls and Mother Hargrove spent some time debating Power's guilt or innocence, the arguments running from "You can see the little boat is going over and everyone would die, so he's got to make a choice" to "No man has the right to choose: that's God's choice."

When Mother Hargrove asked, "Has he really condemned these people to death? Might it not be safe to be outside the boat with a lifebelt than in the boat without a lifebelt?" one of the students responded: "That's why it isn't murder; murder is wishing someone dead."

This took them into the subject of abortion, as one student observed: "That's like saying a doctor who commits an abortion is not guilty of murder because he does not wish the child to die."

Mother Hargrove urged the students to compare Power's use of the survival-of-the-fittest theory to Hitler's use of it, and when someone wondered whether Power would be able "to live with" what he had done, Mother Hargrove said she had learned that most of the crew members of the Enola Gay who did not know the nature of their mission over Hiroshima in 1945 later wound up in mental institutions.

"I think the two situations have that parallel," she said, of the film's dilemma and the Hiroshima bombing. "In both cases you have men who are not really responsible for causing personal hurt. But if you plant in your consciousness the concept of what the human person is, you will try to preserve the human persons involved in any situation. I think this is the great fact we are coming upon today — theologically, psychologically and philosophically. This is what we are trying to make people realize through movies like 'Abandon Ship,' which is maybe not a really good movie, but a very good discussable movie."

Mother Hargrove, who is also noted for her work in Christian-Jewish relations (she won last year's Edith Stein Award), insists that films must be used to help make religion come alive for a film-oriented generation, and that there are many commercial films besides the obvious "Through a Glass, Darkly" and "Parable" which can be employed in religion classes.

"One young agnostic," she said, "told me that Fellini's 'La Dolce Vita' taught him the horror of sin." — (Catholic Press Feature)

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Date Book

Dance Listed
Rochester Catholic Adult Club members will attend a dance on Saturday, June 3, at St. Michael's, Buffalo. For information, call Carmine Petote, 458-5236.

Hat and Wig Show
Notre Dame Women's Organization will hold a luncheon at the Crescent Beach Hotel on Saturday, June 3 at 12 noon. A Hat and Wig Show will be sponsored by B. Forman Co. Chairman: Mrs. John Andrews and Mrs. Edward Yohon. New officers: Mrs. Eugene Yurgallitis, president; Mrs. Eugene W. Bergrin, vice president; Mrs. Edward W. Yohon, treasurer; Mrs. William J. Dempsey, secretary; Mrs. John Andrews, program; Mrs. Richard Klee, publicity.

Spring Tea
Annual Spring Tea, honoring mothers of senior students at Our Lady of Mercy High School, was held at the school on May 24. Mothers of juniors were hostesses. Fashion show given by students of home economics and sewing class. Chairman: Mesdames Robert C. Anno, William G. Kearney, Robert Casey.

Boat Ride
Members of the Merrimacs will have a boat ride on the canal on Wednesday, June 7 from 1 to 4 p.m. Boat will be docked at the Barge Canal Terminal, the old Lehigh Valley Station. Senior citizens invited. Contact Mrs. Frank, 266-1922.

Auxiliary Meeting
Ladies Auxiliary, Knights of Columbus, meeting will be held Thursday, June 1 at 8:30 p.m. Installation of officers. Picnic is scheduled for June 13.

Family Rosary Radio Leaders
The Family Rosary for Peace program is broadcast each evening at 7 p.m. by Rochester radio station WSAY, WMBO-FM in Auburn, television cable companies Channel 8 in Elmira, Channel 5 in Hornell and at 88.75 mc in Corning. Those who will lead in recitation of the Rosary this week will be:
Friday, May 26 — Robert Farrell, St. Pius X.
Saturday, May 27 — (Mass to be celebrated) Hugh Charles Murphy, Holy Name of Jesus Parish, accompanied by employees of Building 23, Machine Shop, Kodak Park.
Sunday, May 28 — Louis Faust, Holy Ghost parish.
Monday, May 29 — Anthony Annunziata, St. James.
Wednesday, May 31 — Eugene Wolf, Our Lady of Perpetual Help.
Thursday, June 1 — Father Leonard Kelly, pastor of Assumption, Fairport, accompanied by Sacred Heart Ladies of his parish.

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