

**MOVIES**

**'Sunday in the Country,' 'Warm' and 'Brilliant'**

By Michael Gallagher  
 New York (NC) — "A Sunday in the Country" (MGM-UA), a warm and brilliant French film, tells about a single day in the life of an old painter, Monsieur Ladmiral (Louis Ducreux). The day is a beautiful Sunday in 1912. The place is the painter's country home

outside Paris. Ladmiral, a widower who lives alone save for one servant, has two children, a son and a daughter. The son (Michel Aumont), a plump businessman, is dutiful and loving. But unfortunately for both him and his father, he's rather dull. He's compounded his dull-

ness, moreover, by marrying a dull wife. Their three lively young children — two sons and a younger daughter — much prefer the company of their Aunt Irene (Sabine Azema), a preference that Ladmiral obviously shares. The son knows this and has gotten used to it. But even so, some pain remains. Unlike her faithful brother, Irene rarely visits her father. When she does, as she does today, the loud honk of a horn announces her approach. She has bought herself an automobile, a noisy and bright-colored vehicle quite suited to her, and she descends from it in a whirlwind of laughter and bustle, disrupting the congenial afternoon torpor that her brother and his wife have bred around them. Irene's affection and vitality delight her old father, although the sight of her is a prelude to sadness as he immediately starts thinking of the moment when she'll depart. Though she must be approaching 40, Irene behaves like a high-spirited schoolgirl. And though she's fiercely independent, the owner of a fashionable boutique, she habitually is entangled in disastrous love affairs. Unlike her brother and his wife, Irene takes no pains to praise the old man's paintings but is quite blunt with her reservations, daring him, at 73, to take some chances with art and show some passion. Capricious though she

seems, Ladmiral knows in his heart that her judgment is sound. The world has rewarded him materially for his art, but its rewards have made him cautious. He never dared to be great, and so he is ending his life without knowing whether or not he might have been. All this he confides to Irene as the two sip drinks at an outdoor cafe in town while country people dance and flirt with one another to the music of a four-piece band. Irene listens and understands and imparts just enough sympathy when she hears her father's rueful confession. But once back at the house, the cares of her disordered life obtrude in the form of a phone call and overwhelm all other considerations. She must get back to Paris at once. The son and his family stay, but the mood is not the same and Ladmiral sees them off at the station on the late train with no significant regrets. Ladmiral walks back home alone. Instead of going into the house, he walks to his studio behind it. He moves to the easel holding a canvas on which his latest safe and ingratiating work has been taking form and sits down on the couch that had been its subject. From there he gazes out the window at the edge of woodland lit by the last of the day's brightness. As should be evident from this summary, nothing much happens in "A Sunday in the Country" — nothing, that is, if you're thinking in terms

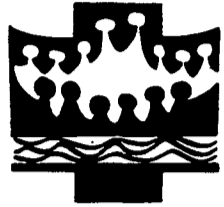
of "Gremlins" or "Beverly Hills Cop."

If you're thinking, however, in terms of gaining some insight into the complexities and bafflements of human love and ambition and the nature of art, then a great deal does take place. We come away feeling that we know this father and his two children quite intimately. And in the varied affections, desires and flaws we encounter in them, we recognize something we perhaps know all too well in ourselves. Now, however, we know it better and are perhaps more willing to con-

front it.

Directed by Bertrand Tavernier and written by Pierre Bost, "A Sunday in the Country" is a rare film that no one who loves movies should let slip by. In French with English subtitles, it's marked by some fine performances, most notably that of Ducreux, a veteran stage actor making his debut at 73 in a major film role. The U.S. Catholic Conference has classified it A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America has rated it G — general audiences.

**Insights In Liturgy**



By Father Thomas P. Mull

**Called To Preach**

By Father Thomas P. Mull

One of the topics of conversation today has to deal with preaching and, more specifically, the homily during a Eucharistic celebration. In the next five weeks, this column will deal with the purpose of preaching and the place of the homily. Further, it will look at the canonical and liturgical guidelines within which preaching takes place.

Not long ago, a discussion occurred around the topic of preaching. Some of the participants were married couples, two single people were in the group, a priest was also present. The conversation seemed to center on the homily at the just completed Mass. Questions were being raised regarding the central focus of the homily. Was it relevant to the lives of the people present? Was it offered in such a way that all who heard could feel spoken "with" and not spoken "down to?" What about the content? Was it practical or theoretical?

I would imagine that many such conversations take place each Sunday morning. (Perhaps I should say I hope many such conversations take place each Sunday morning.) The focus of this conversation is the purpose and meaning of preaching. I'd like to deal with that in this article.

"Proclaim to all the world the good news..." (Mark 16:15) These words of the synoptic writer form the basis for the Christian's role in proclamation. To proclaim, by word and example, the living presence of Jesus the Christ is the role and responsibility of all baptized people. The era since Vatican II has opened up many avenues of witness for the People of God. Very strong in this witness is the proclamation of the gospel. Christians are coming to discover they have a role within the community that demands lives of faith and hope and charity. They are discovering that this life is not only within those moments of private devotion, but also in the day-to-day activities of the 20th century person. Proclamation by deed is as important as proclamation by word of mouth.

It is clear, however, that actions oftentimes have to be explained. The power of witness is enlivened by action and word. Combined with scripture, it becomes a vehicle for transmitting the involvement of God in the

lives of people. Hence, public proclamation is necessary and the responsibility of those who have accepted the call to discipleship. Canon law states: "It is the obligation and inherent right of the Church, independent of any human authority, to preach the Gospel to all peoples." (c. 747) All then are called to preach. Traditionally, we see only the Eucharistic homily as the time of preaching. We have not always appreciated other formal and informal opportunities. To begin with, then, it should be clear that preaching in its broadest sense involves all Christian people. What a person does is as important (perhaps more important) than what a person says. We preach by our deeds. It should be obvious from what has been said and what we know in our hearts that preaching is done each day in our lives in many different ways.

If one restricts the "proclamation of the good news" only to those times when one is in Church, that person is necessarily being closed to many gifted experiences when the Lord's presence can be expressed. Before we delve into the times of preaching and the person who preaches, we should be clear in our understanding of the broad scope of preacher and what is preached.

The discussion group cited at the beginning of this article were people who were interested in putting the Word of God into action. They wanted to hear that Word proclaimed, not simply to say they had heard a good homily, but to be able to leave that assembly renewed in spirit and in hope that what they would be doing, and how they would be dealing with other people might reflect the gospel values and the Word put into action. In the American bishops' publication, *Fulfilled In Your Hearing*, the broad scope of preaching is elucidated: "What preachers may need to witness to more than anything else is the conviction that authentic, mature faith demands the hard struggle of thinking and choosing. What the Word of God offers us in a way to interpret our human lives, a way to face the ambiguities and challenges of the human condition, not a pat answer to every problem and question that comes along." (p. 15)

Preaching has to be done in order to help people make decisions and form their lives. Next week, we will look at forms of preaching and who preaches.

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