

Is It a Sin to Watch an R-Rated Movie?

By Michael Gallagher
New York (NC) — The other day I had a phone conversation with a woman who wondered how it could be permissible for Catholics to attend R-rated movies.

She pointed out that several R-rated movies on the classification list put out by the U.S. Catholic Conference Department of Communication were classified A-III — adults. One or two, in fact, were classified A-II — adults and adolescents.

The problem that prompted the woman's question is very real and deserves a careful response.

Albany Campers To Have Reunion

Alumni of Marian Lodge and Camp Tekakwitha, former Albany diocesan summer camps, have been invited to join former staffers as well as friends of the present Pyramid Lake Camp, for the third annual reunion of alumni of all three camps from 1 to 4 p.m., Saturday, March 16, at the College of St. Rose Activities Building, Western Avenue, Albany.

Activities will include swimming in the college pool, games in the gym, viewing slides and pictures, as well as renewing acquaintances. Further information is available from Sister Peg Sullivan, Pyramid Lake Camp, 39 Philip St., Albany, N.Y. 12207 (518) 463-4411.

Let's first look at the rationale that guides the Motion Picture Association of America in its ratings. It's a philosophy that's quite different from ours.

The USCC Communication Department takes moral and aesthetic criteria into consideration in making its judgments. For the MPAA, however, preoccupations of this sort have only an indirect relation to its work.

The MPAA is concerned primarily not with morality or aesthetics, but with preventing the resurgence of state censorship and the advent of something entirely new: movie censorship on a national level.

It has set up its Classification and Rating Association, a body that rates films according to a letter code: G — general audiences; PG — parental guidance suggested; PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned to give special guidance for attendance of children under 13; R — restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or guardian; and X — no one under 17 admitted (the age limit may vary depending on the locale).

This, the MPAA would contend vociferously, is in no way censorship but rather a sorting out according to audience suitability, with no value or moral judgments implied.

Practically speaking, the X rating is a decided stigma and

many newspapers and television stations will not carry ads for movies so rated. Thus it would be a rare filmmaker from a major company who would not be willing to trim certain effects in order to get an R rating instead of an X.

Some filmmakers who aim their movies at younger teen-agers consider an R rating harmful at the box office and strive for a PG or PG-13. Steven Spielberg, who enriched our cultural heritage with "Raiders of the Lost Ark," "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom," and "E.T." is a prime example.

And just to make things a little more complicated, there are other filmmakers — either those rare Hollywood artists who make true adult movies or the great mass who deliberately set out to make movies that exploit sex and violence — for whom the R is, in the first case, no problem and in the second, the desired rating.

Finally, the G rating seems to have become a kiss of death at the box office and filmmakers will go to great lengths to avoid it, even by putting in a naughty word or two.

When CARA makes its decisions, it doesn't evaluate the movie directly, but rather judges it in terms of what most American parents would think of it vis-a-vis their children. How much protection would most American parents want in this

particular case?

The parents of America must remain satisfied with the movie industry. For if they get stirred up, as they might do with a wrong guess by CARA, then they'll start writing their elected representatives and the dreaded specter of censorship will hover once more over the industry as it did in the '30s.

Neither CARA nor the filmmakers eager to get the desired rating have morality much on their minds. CARA's aim is to keep the censors off the industry's back and the filmmaker's aim is to get the rating that will be the most useful at the box office.

BK Concert To Feature Jr. Musicians

Bishop Kearney High School's annual Spring Concert will feature not only the Kearney musical groups but seventh and eighth grade musicians from Monroe County, 7:30 p.m., Saturday, March 9 at the high school auditorium.

This is the second year Arthur Rietman, director of music, has invited the younger band members to participate.

The concert will include performances by the Bishop Kearney Marching Kings Band, the Concert Band and the Brass and Jazz Ensembles. A \$1 donation will be asked.

Let's now go back to my opening question: Is it permissible for Catholics to see R-rated movies, something that would seem to be implied by the USCC's refusal to classify all R-rated movies as O — morally offensive?

Instead of answering directly, something an Irishman always tries to avoid, let me say that from the sketch I have just given of the way CARA works, it should be apparent that its ratings have only the most tenuous connection with morality.

Most American parents — whether you and I like it or not — are not likely to raise a big fuss about the favorable depiction in movies of such things as fornication, marijuana smoking, abortion and even adultery.

They might not approve of such things, but if these are depicted in a non-blatant manner in a movie, they won't be too disturbed.

Hence a movie showing any or all of the above in a favorable light could well get a PG.

On the other hand, a quite moral movie, as we see it, might get an R because of some incidental bad language.

Layman Boston Chanceller

Boston (NC) — Archbishop Bernard F. Law of Boston has named Paul Devlin, financial officer of the Diocese of Providence, R.I., as the first layperson chancellor of the Boston archdiocese.

Devlin succeeds Bishop Thomas V. Daily, former auxiliary bishop in Boston who became the first bishop of the Diocese of Palm Beach, Fla. The appointment is effective March 19.

SCHOOL REGISTRATION

Lady of Lourdes

Brighton — Registration for the 1985-86 academic year of Our Lady of Lourdes School grades 3-8 is being held 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. through March 8 at the school, 165 Rhinecliff Drive.

through second grade, is being held 9 a.m.-1:13 p.m., through March 8 at the school, 601 Edgewood Ave.

St. Charles

Registration for St. Charles Borromeo School is now being taken 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. weekdays in the school office. Parents are asked to bring a \$10 registration fee and the child's baptismal certificate.

Queen of Peace

Brighton — Registration for the 1985-86 academic year of Our Lady Queen of Peace school, kindergarten



Medallion Nominee

Rick Lagiewski of Cardinal Mooney High School stands beside his print of a peacock which has earned him a nomination for the national competition of the Kodak Medallion of Excellence. Lagiewski's photograph is on display at the 1985 Scholastic Art Exhibit in the Ward Gallery of Sibley's downtown.

Pope, Gromyko

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was virtually wiped out in the 1940s under the reign of Joseph Stalin.

Accurate statistics about Catholic life in the Soviet Union are difficult to obtain. Church sources estimate that there could be as many as 14 million Catholics currently in the Soviet Union.

In 1964, the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives made public findings by a team of researchers showing the scope of repression against Catholics in the Soviet Union and other Soviet-bloc countries.

The report said that from 1917 to 1959, 55 bishops, 12,800 priests and Religious and 2.5 million lay people were killed. In addition, 199 bishops, 32,000 priests and 10 million lay people were deported.

Monasteries were taken over by the government, churches were closed and all Catholic organizations were dissolved, added the report.

Much of this repression

was aimed at the Ukrainian Catholic Church which was stripped of its entire hierarchy and can no longer function openly in the Soviet Union.

The Ukrainian church, one of Catholicism's Eastern rites, exists outside the Soviet Union, composed mainly of exiles and their descendants.

Institutional Catholic life today in the Soviet Union is concentrated mainly in Lithuania, where about 80 percent of the 3.2 million population is Catholic. Lithuania has seven ecclesiastical jurisdictions, several bishops and about 700 priests. However, there are restrictions on the number of students who can enter seminaries, and formal religious education is not allowed.

A similar situation exists in Latvia, where 10 percent of the 2.5 million population is Catholic.

In other parts of the Soviet Union, institutional Catholic life is virtually nonexistent. Except for Moscow, Lenin-

grad and a few other Soviet cities, there are no Catholic churches open for public worship.

In the 1980s, however, there have been signs that relations have occasionally improved. Two new bishops were named in Lithuania in 1982 and another was named in 1984. Bishops cannot be named in Lithuania without government approval. The appointments usually are the result of church-state negotiations.

Vatican officials cite the naming of bishops as a sign of improved relations in Soviet-bloc countries.

In 1983 two Lithuanian bishops were allowed to visit the Vatican. It was the first time the government had given such permission since Lithuania was absorbed by the Soviet Union in 1941.

In 1983, the pope also named a cardinal in Latvia, thus giving the Soviet Union its first residential cardinal.

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