

et cetera



Panel finds

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less. "The lack of joy is a lot more serious than suggestions that he might have lied when he was a child," she said. "I think feeling pursued by God, feeling challenged by God to live out a sense of commitment to service, can make you serious, but I don't think that precludes a sense of joy. I think at the end we get a sense of a messiah who has surrendered to a cruel God, rather than of a son serving a loving father."

Spiritually, the former theology teacher found the movie unchallenging. "It raised questions on a theological level, but for me they weren't questions that mattered," she said. "I don't get a spirituality out of the film that's rooted in desire, a longing for God," she added. "I get a sense of a spirituality that's rooted in guilt."

McCarthy was also offended by the film's depiction of women in the film. "I have a problem with women being used as the primary symbol of temptation for turning men away from God," she noted. "The film re-emphasized old stereotypes."

Mary Magdalene, for example, is shown as becoming a prostitute simply because Jesus had rejected her as a girlfriend. "(The film) doesn't even give her the courtesy of the freedom to choose," she pointed out. "Everything is done in response to a man."

Overall, she thought the film a bad one, noting that when she saw the film in Toronto, the audience laughed out loud at scenes that were not intended to be funny, particularly one in which the devil, disguised as an angel, told Jesus that there was only one woman — Mary Magdalene — with different faces.

She also found the film too long, the acting inconsistent (particularly in the case of Willem Dafoe), and the excessive violence, bloodshed and nudity unnecessary. She also noted that some of the special effects and symbolism were poorly handled, and said the scene where Jesus takes out his heart made no sense to her at all.

McCarthy suggested that some of the confusion in the characterization of Jesus was produced by a dualistic sense of the world inherent in both the novel and the film, a sense that pits the spirit against the flesh.

"(The movie) fails because of the dualism," she said. "This is a character who's so locked into dualism that his life makes no sense. His death makes no sense."

In contrast, she noted, is the more complete and balanced development of the character of Judas. "Judas gave a sense of someone struggling to integrate a sense of God with the needs of people, and doing it in the context of relationships," she said, pointing out that Judas is shown as a faithful and loving friend to Jesus, and a revolutionary who cared deeply

about the Jewish people. Judas's betrayal is not made out of greed, she noted, but at the specific request of Jesus.

Jesus, meanwhile, is shown as out of touch with people. "At one point Jesus says he sees God in all men, but we don't see him in relationship with anyone except Judas," McCarthy said. "He was always isolated."

Karen Franz, editor-in-chief of the *Courier Journal*, found the depiction of Judas one of the strong points of the film. "The idea of Judas having some other reason than monetary for betraying Jesus was interesting," she said.

In contrast, Franz noted, the Jesus character in the film "is a sullen, miserable creature. He was vacillating so much that he seemed almost neurotic."

The idea that Jesus was tormented by the sense of what he had to do seems credible to Franz, but not as it was manifested in the film. "The conflict that's set up in the Scriptures is sufficient for me," she noted. "The wedding feast at Cana when Jesus tells his mother he's not ready to reveal himself yet, that seems plausible. The idea (in the film) of Jesus making cross bars for crosses doesn't seem plausible."

Jesus's final acceptance of death on the cross seemed less than admirable to Franz. "The decision (to be crucified) in the film is not a noble one," she said. "It's made in the dream sequence by a man who's 10 seconds away from death anyway."

Franz said she went to the film thinking that parts of it would repulse her, but that she'd find some ideas that were profound. She was disappointed.

"It was hopelessly muddled," she said. "This could have been a good film, a wonderful film — the concept could have been enlightening. There was no light. I think Scorsese got lost on the way to a good idea."

Father Sebastian A. Falcone, president and dean of St. Bernard's Institute, likewise found the film's exploration of Jesus's struggle a disappointment.

"I found Jesus was so terribly indecisive, so deluded by circumstances, that I don't think the portrayal worked," the priest said. "It ended up we were dealing with a terribly confused, almost demented Jesus."

He added that the attempt to show Jesus in an agonizingly real way makes him come across as "almost sub-human — and that ends up being offensive." He found the picture of Jesus being driven by a sense of guilt as terribly exaggerated. He also noted that the attempt to show Jesus being pursued by God through voices, footsteps, and shadows was overdone.

However, the priest said that the most controversial segment of the film for those protesting it — the dream sequence in which Jesus imagines himself married and in which the Christian religion spreads based on a false resurrection — is not a problem if it is understood in the context of a dream. "Some of the problems arise out of an inability to see the frame in which this takes place," he said. "People see it as an historical portrayal, and that's not what it was meant to be."

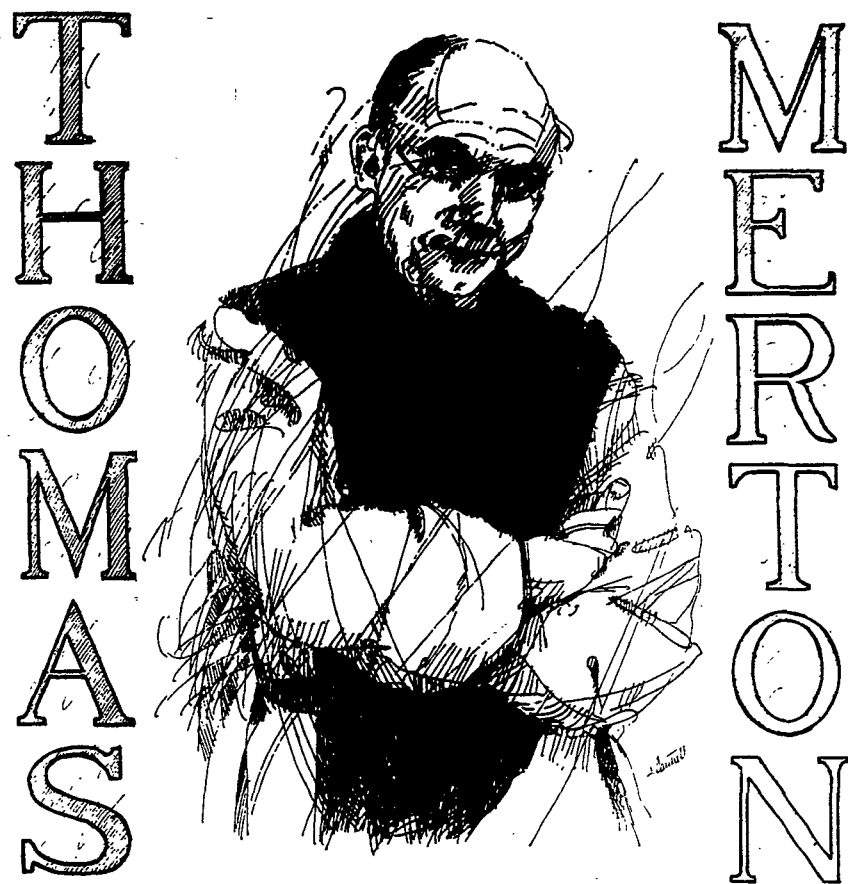
Father Falcone also noted that some of the liberties taken with the Scripture stories and characterizations are not offensive if understood in the context of the film being a fictional exploration. At times, he said, Scorsese had to take some liberties because of the visual nature of film. The director was forced to make decisions about how best to show the struggle between the spirit and the flesh upon which the film is based, the priest said.

Still, Father Falcone said the movie is flawed. "As a film, I would have to say, an artistic triumph it was not," he stated. "I'm not so sure as a piece of art it succeeds."

"In terms of the intention of the film maker, I'm not sure he has provided an acceptable human portrait of Christ," he added.

The priest noted that although he doesn't think the film should be banned, he would recommend that only those who are spiritually mature see it.

"I would feel that to many people who haven't thought very seriously about the basic humanity of Christ, it will be terribly offensive," he said. But "to those who are looking to Jesus in terms of his human qualities and his struggling with the deep issues that (he) had to resolve, it might bring out some really significant insights."



THE WORLD IN MY BLOODSTREAM

OCTOBER 6 - 8, 1988

A THOMAS MERTON CONFERENCE

Nazareth College of Rochester

4245 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14610

Thursday, October 6

- 3:30 p.m. - **Thoughts In Solitude: A Call to Prayer** Guided by: Msgr. William H. Shannon, Professor Emeritus, Nazareth College. Editor, *The Hidden Ground of Love, The Letters of Thomas Merton*. Author, *Thomas Merton's Dark Path*. President, International Thomas Merton Society.
- 5:00 p.m. - **Registration** (No Registration Fee)
- 7:00 p.m. - **Merton: Prophetic Voice**
Speaker: Sr. Mary Luke Tobin, S.L. Director, Thomas Merton Center for Creative Exchange, Colorado.

Friday, October 7

- 1:30 p.m. - **Merton: A Documentary**
- 2:30 p.m. - **Thomas Merton: A Voice for Today.** A panel of students reflect on Merton's meaning for them.
- 3:45 p.m. - **The Seven Storey Mountain: A Conversion Story**
Speaker: Dr. Christine M. Bochen, Professor, Religious Studies, Nazareth College. Secretary, International Thomas Merton Society. Author, *Journey to Rome*.
- 5:00 p.m. - **Evening Prayer**
- 8:00 p.m. - **Keynote Address: The Seven Storey Mountain: The Making of a Spiritual Classic.** Speaker: Robert Giroux, Editor, *The Seven Storey Mountain*. Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc.

Saturday, October 8

- 10:00 a.m. - **Workshop: Non-Violence** Directed by: Sr. Mary Luke Tobin, S.L.
- 11:30 a.m. - **Thomas Merton and the Genre of Contemplative Poetry**
Speaker: Dr. Bonnie Bowman Thurston, Associate Professor, Theology and Religious Studies, Wheeling Jesuit College, West Virginia. Treasurer, International Thomas Merton Society.
- 3:00 p.m. - **Reflections on The Tower of Babel.** Speaker: Dr. Victor Kramer, Professor, American Literature, Georgia State University. Author, *Merton: Monk and Artist*. Editor, *Merton Annual*.
- 4:30 p.m. - **Celebration of the Eucharist.** Presider: Msgr. William H. Shannon. Directors of Music: Dr. Barbara Staropoli, S.S.J. and Dr. Monica Weis, S.S.J.
- 5:45 p.m. - **Reception and Dinner** (Advance Reservations Required)
- 8:00 p.m. - **The Tower of Babel: A Morality Play** by Thomas Merton
Directed by: Mr. Joseph Baranowski
Presented by: The Nazareth College Theater Department

All events will be held in the Forum, Otto Shults Community Center with one exception: the performance of *The Tower of Babel* on Saturday evening will be held in the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse Chapel, 4095 East Ave. (adjacent to the College).

Dining Facilities will be available on campus
For further information, call 716-586-2525, ext. 480 or 482

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____

I am planning to attend on:

Thursday _____ Friday _____ Saturday _____

(Advanced Registration Appreciated, but not required. There is no registration fee for attending the conference.) ☐ Yes: I wish to make a reservation for Saturday evening's reception and dinner at Nazareth College's Medaille Dining Hall. Enclosed is my check for twelve dollars to confirm my reservation. (Reservations must be made by October 1st.)

Please return registration form to: Thomas Merton Conference
Nazareth College, 4245 East Ave., Rochester, NY 14610

Mercy sisters to celebrate foundress' birthday soon

The public is invited to join with the Sisters of Mercy to celebrate the birthday of the sisters' foundress, Catherine McAuley, on Thursday, Sept. 29, at 7 p.m. at the Our Lady of Mercy Motherhouse, 1437 Blossom Rd., Rochester.

Sisters will be on hand to inform those who

are interested how to join in the mission of Mercy through the congregation's Vocation Program, Associate Program for Men and Women or volunteer opportunities.

Call Sister Mary Fran Wegman at (716)342-9594 for information.