

Face of Jesus

Continued from page 1

Thus, Father Falcone acknowledged, various depictions of Jesus in art, literature and film are simply following a tradition begun in the earliest days of Christianity.

But as each generation has attempted to create its own image of Christ, it has had to contend with earlier representations. At times, the new images are intended to counter something from earlier conceptions that rings false to the culture or to the artist.

Father Richard Blake, SJ, who teaches in the English department at Le Moyne College in Syracuse and reviews films for



Max von Sydow, in "The Greatest Story Ever Told" (1965) portrayed Jesus as a more-than-human, almost-mystical being. The film conveys a sense of spiritual potential.

America magazine, noted, for example, that 19th century depictions of Christ were "super-sentimental." Jesus became a pale, comfortable teacher of middle-class ethics and morality. That sentimentality lingers, he said, in the form of holy cards with rays of light projecting from Jesus' head.

Recent depictions of Christ, on the other hand, have tended to emphasize his more human side, Father Blake said. "We take the human side of the incarnation more seriously," he observed.

In his course, Halligan presents a microcosm of this shifting perception of Jesus in film. The cinematic Jesus evolves from pious depictions of a self-possessed king to a more human, yet still-godly savior. He said he chose to examine images of Jesus in film in part because of personal interest, but even more in recognition of a cultural reality.

"Fifteen minutes exposure to film has far more impact to a student than scholarly study of texts," Halligan said. "If this is popular Christianity's most frequent source of knowing Jesus, and if this is the source from which their images of Jesus came, then we should not overlook it."

The course's summer session, which begins May 30, opens with the 1961 "King of Kings," which shows Christ as a great religious hero. "Jeffrey Hunter portrays Jesus as a man's man," Halligan said, noting that Jesus as played by Hunter is clearly in control throughout.

At the same time, the film incorporates a strong political undercurrent of the power struggle in Israel between Barabbas and the Zealots and King Herod. Hunter's Jesus remains above the struggle, however, and the film conveys a sense that "there is a fresh wind in politics," Halligan said. Pointing out that the film was released at the beginning of John Kennedy's presidency, the professor remarked, "If you

were caught up in the Kennedy enthusiasm, this film would have been in step with it."

"The Greatest Story Ever Told" (1965), on the other hand, was released during the Second Vatican Council, Halligan said, and is "a much more serious, meditative film.

"I think there is a sense that the spiritual life is a profound thing, and that social change is going to happen when people begin to make the message their own," he said. Jesus, as played by Max von Sydow, is shown as a more-than-earthly person, a mystical being. "If there is any Jesus who most closely approaches the Jesus of 'I am the Word' of John's Gospel, this is the one," he noted.

On the other hand, director Pier Pasolini, a Marxist, gives a communist spin to the Jesus character in "The Gospel According to St. Matthew," released at approximately the same time as "The Greatest Story Ever Told." Halligan, who lived in Italy during the early 1960s, said that Pasolini's film reflected the political spirit in Italy at that time, with Jesus clearly supporting the poor and downtrodden against the authorities and the wealthy.

"The figure (of Jesus) in this movie is a fiery reformer," Halligan observed. The film, he added, conveys the message that "we are all pilgrims moving to a higher goal. For Pasolini, the higher goal is here. You get no sense of another world, of the future."

In the years following the release of "The Greatest Story Ever Told" and Pasolini's film, the optimism and activism of the early 1960s gave way to social unrest and violence. By the early 1970s, the United States had passed through the turmoil of assassinations, student protests and the Vietnam War. In theological circles, it was a time when people were beginning to emerge from a period of asking if God were dead.

"Jesus Christ Superstar," is a reflection of this period of turbulence, Halligan said. The Jesus of this film is unsure and questioning. "People needed a Jesus they could see who experienced what they experienced: doubt and uncertainty," he observed.

The pendulum swung back a bit with Franco Zeffirelli's 1975 "Jesus of Nazareth," which returned, in some ways, to the in-control Jesus of a decade before, but maintained the sense of a Christ who was very much human, Halligan said. Zeffirelli's Jesus is equally aware of his divine identity and of the political undercurrents of the age, and is shown as a person who cares about people, not just ideals, Halligan said.

"Jesus of Nazareth" was made after Watergate and the fall of Vietnam, he

noted. The revolutionary fervor of the 1960s was on the wane, and people were searching for a "center point," something or someone they could base themselves on, he said. Noting that Jimmy Carter's successful campaign of 1976 had emphasized honesty and human rights, Halligan observed that the election and the film's focus indicated that "people were searching for values."

In teaching his course, Halligan has discovered that when a film's image of Jesus conflicts with people's accepted vision of him, the viewing public generally rejects



The most recent film depiction of Christ, "The Last Temptation of Christ" (1988), shows Jesus (Willem Dafoe) as a confused, almost neurotic person.

the portrayal. For example, his students — who have been raised in a capitalist society — have a hard time relating to Pasolini's Marxist depiction. Likewise, the Jesus of "Jesus Christ Superstar," belongs to a time period that is no longer real to today's young people and thus is also rejected by his students.

Yet Father Falcone pointed out that divergent views of Jesus are not necessarily bad, nor is one individual portrayal necessarily more valid than another. He suggested the analogy of four painters, each looking at a mountain in a different way. "Take all four and jam them into one portrait, and you've lost the four perspectives," he said.

In the same way, the different views of Jesus can give insights into Christ and faith, and even society. And the fact that artists continue to try to make Jesus contemporary is a testimony to the powerful impression he makes on people nearly 2,000 years after his death on the cross.

"The message is, Jesus is a figure for all time," Father Falcone concluded.

St. John Fisher enters cooperative programs

Beginning in September, St. John Fisher College will offer a cooperative program with the College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse University and an expanded cooperative program with Alfred University's College of Nursing and Health Care.

The first agreement will allow students to attend Fisher for two years before transferring to the College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) on the campus of Syracuse University. There, they will be able to pursue 10 different degrees, including forestry, environmental studies, landscape architecture, and environmental and forest biology.

The agreement with Alfred University

will enable students to get a four-year nursing degree without ever leaving the Fisher campus. Students would take mostly liberal arts courses their first two years before transferring as juniors into Alfred's nursing program, which has a division of students at Fisher.

Although Fisher and Alfred have had a cooperative nursing agreement since 1977, the program has responded to the needs of registered nurses with associate or diploma backgrounds seeking a bachelor's degree in nursing. The new agreement is aimed at students without previous college education, as well as students with degrees in other fields seeking baccalaureate training in nursing.

Readers' guide

Air Conditioning

Hicks Home Heating
Call us for Summer Comfort
Heating & Air Conditioning Specialists
• Sales • Service • Installation
Family Owned & Operated
424-4848

TAYLOR HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING
"Since 1917" 10% OFF
APRILAIRE HUMIDIFIERS
MEMBER CALL A FAMILY BUSINESS
482-4664
Contractors of America 429 Merchants Rd., Rochester

Attorney

EDWARD A. WURTZ
General Civil Practice of
Law • Real Estate • Wills
& Estates • Negligence
Home Appointments
Available
154 S. Fitzhugh
548-5260

Bathroom & Kitchen Remodeling

KITCHENS BATHS CERAMIC TILE DECKS
Perfield Remodeling
All Work Guaranteed
586-7250

BATHROOM & KITCHEN REPAIRS AND REMODELING
21 Years Serving Greater Rochester
All Work Personally Attended
Free, Courteous Estimates
Call Jim: 352-3447

Please Patronize Our Advertisers

Beauty Services

In-Home Beauty Service
Shampoo • Cut • Set
Permanent • Color
Manicure

COMMUNITY CARE OF ROCHESTER
288-7560
An Affiliate of Visiting Nurse

Bobcat Service

Wm. Smith
General Contractor
Bobcat Service Backhoe, Rockhound
Hourly, Weekly Rates
Call: 716-454-3876, 458-3974

Building Materials

RUSSO CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS, INC.
437 E. Jefferson Rd. Bull Saw Mill Rd
Pittsford, NY Mendon, NY
Concrete • Sand • Gravel
248-5140

Carpentry

HARVEY L. SCHWIEGER
Carpenter - Contractor
Since 1950
Woodwork & Stairway Specialist
381-9323
Replace Old Iron With New Wood
\$\$ SAVE WITH SCHWIEGER \$\$

Carpet/Furniture Cleaning

CARPET CLEANING

F.D. Cleaning Service
Since 1975
\$54.90 2 Rooms | \$99.00 6 Rooms
Free SoilGard & Deodorizer
Upholstery Cleaning Pet Odor Removal
288-8457

WILLIAM L. ESTES (U.S. NAVY-RETIRED)

SERVICEMASTER EAST
258 MACEDON CENTER RD.
FAIRPORT, N.Y. 14450
(716) 223-1709
PROFESSIONAL CARPET CLEANING
FURNITURE, FLOORS, SPECIALTY SERVICES

Carp
DON
Any
Inclu
for fir
5/31/
Own
• Util
Rates
39%
Senio
Dis
Chin
Exp.
Drive
S
ALL
SM
Al M
Elect
Heat
Resk
Design
Fulle
Ro
Fulle
Roch
Pho
Home
ROC
* SIDI
BOWN
Establish
Inter
Inter
Des
HO
R
des
prof
over
Cati
thei
Pre
vic
and
gre
• P
Thu
• In
• You
Thurs