



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier

Cast members of the Mercy and McQuaid Players' production of *Godspell* surround 'Jesus' (center, Tony D'Aprix) during the crucifixion scene. The students were as moved by the play's characters as the audience members were.

Musical casts good 'spell' on student cast

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

If going to Mass on Sunday could be anything like attending Our Lady of Mercy High School's production of *Godspell*, then the pews would always be filled, with worshipers flocking to the front, rather than to the back of the church.

On Saturday night, Nov. 18, a disciplined, enthusiastic cast of 13 students from Mercy and McQuaid Jesuit High School put on a stellar performance of the 1971 rock musical, written by John-Michael Tebelak and scored by Stephen Schwartz.

In the musical, Christ's disciples, each garbed in clothes reflecting a particular era of human history, helped the Messiah act out His stories, giving them a lively pers-

pective not often found when they are read in liturgical services. That liveliness caused some of the cast members to draw closer to Christ, who comes across in the musical as a concerned, serious teacher of morals, expressing Himself through humorous anecdotes that consistently overturn society's prevailing values.

"I've spoken to about three people who've done the role of Jesus before and it's changed them," recalled McQuaid's Tony D'Aprix, who played Jesus. "I didn't feel that I was going to be changed by this role, ... but halfway through it, my heart just went out to the guy."

Playing "the guy" has made D'Aprix think more seriously about his daily actions, he said. "In my studies before, I would wait until the last possible minute

before (a paper) was due, and now I start right away. That's not a big thing, but it's a big thing for me."

D'Aprix noted that he worked hard to get in touch with his character, and the extra effort paid off in his performance. Indeed, the young actor not only made the audience see just how Christ gently cared for his followers, but also how He prodded them, almost to the point of obnoxiousness, by His incessant insistence on living out God's commandments to the fullest.

Ironically, D'Aprix' best friend, Jason Skelly, played the treacherous Judas Iscariot. Acting in *Godspell* brought home to Skelly the tragedy of Judas' life. "That realization that he (Judas) was the one who betrayed Jesus was something," he said. "Judas was truly upset after the crucifixion."

Fortunately for Skelly, the musical did not leave a similar feeling in his soul. "*Godspell* opened up new doors in the area of my faith. It shed new light in areas

of my life ... I just overall have a good feeling," he concluded.

Mercy's Shannon Mattaro feels differently about the New Testament's parables now that she has finished her role as a prostitute in the musical. "In church, I would listen (to parables), but it was kind of in one ear and out the other, but it kind of makes more sense when you act it out," she said.

Peggy Riley, a Mercy junior, played a character from the future, in which the Gospel message remains as relevant as it was in Christ's time. "I feel that the Gospel is strong enough and the light of God is strong enough to last out through centuries and centuries," she said.

But right here in the 20th century, Riley hoped to convey her renewed sense of faith to her friends. Before she took on the role, her religious beliefs were more self-centered, she said, noting that she sometimes used her friends' curiosity about the musical as an opportunity to talk about the Gospel.

"It's easy to spread because of the humor of (the musical)," she said. "I've been to different churches and I've experienced some really interesting and funny preaching, but to perform it myself has been great."

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