

Characters confront lawless world in film

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Increasing lawlessness in the big city touches the lives of several fortysomething characters in *Grand Canyon* (20th Century Fox).

Los Angeles has become an alarming place to live for Mack (Kevin Kline) after he is nearly robbed at gunpoint in the inner city and his wife, Claire (Mary McDonnell), while jogging, finds a baby girl left for dead in the bushes.

Mack was rescued from a pack of thugs by tow-truck driver Simon (Danny Glover) and he shows his appreciation in two ways — by arranging a blind date for him with the friend (Alfre Woodard) of his secretary Dee (Mary-Louise Parker) and finding an apartment in a safer neighborhood for Simon's sister and her two youngsters, who are threatened by gang warfare all around them.

As Mack encourages Simon's friendship and discourages more than friendship from Dee, he tolerates longtime friend Davis (Steve Martin), who goes right on making graphically violent movies after he is as casually and brutally shot as any character in his films.

Mack's best friend, however, is his wife. And her desire to keep the aban-

doned baby forces them to face up to the fear of violence and still hold in wonder the fragility of life.

Directed by Lawrence Kasdan and co-written with his wife, Meg Kasdan, *Grand Canyon* is a thoughtful look at hope and despair in troubled times.

As he did in *The Big Chill*, the director fleshes out a number of characters through their competent performances in honestly written situations.

A few scenes such as Mack giving a hairy driving lesson to his teenage son could be trimmed, but overall the movie transcends its portrayal of the escalating violence in today's society with strong characters.

Due to brief violence, adulterous references, momentary nudity and recurring rough language, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.



Gemma La Mana-20th Century Fox
Kevin Kline (left) portrays Mack and Danny Glover is Simon in *Grand Canyon*, Lawrence Kasdan's new drama about big city dwellers grappling with the harsh realities of contemporary urban life and learning to recognize the small miracles around them.

Father Girzone offers far-fetched book

The Shepherd, by Father Joseph Girzone; MacMillan Co. (New York, 1990); 246 pages; \$19.95.

By Monsignor Charles Diviney
Guest contributor

The Shepherd could be called *Joshua III* because it is built on the same idea of *Joshua* and *Joshua and the Children*. These two books consider what would happen if Jesus returned to the modern world and how people would react to his presence.

The first book tells the story of Joshua's reappearance as a young wood worker whose gentle and kindly manner creates a spirit of goodwill and helps break down the walls of prejudice. Some people who do not accept Joshua report him to the Vatican, which summons him to Rome. There, Joshua castigates members of the curia and then mysteriously disappears.

The locale for *Joshua and the Children* is Northern Ireland. Although the town is torn by bigotry and fierce hatred, Joshua ingratiates himself to the town's children — both Protestant and Catholic — and begins to reduce the hostile climate. But just as signs of peace appear, militants assassinate Joshua. When the casket is opened at his funeral, his body is missing.

Already a best seller, *The Shepherd*,

the series' latest installment, casts a bishop as the central character. Still, Joshua remains the motivating force.

This book develops a secondary theme: the idea that today's church is too authoritarian, anti-feminist, legalistic, harsh, non-ecumenical and obsessed with sex; it cannot last unless it changes drastically.

You have heard many of this book's suggested changes before. Here's a partial list: Turn the diocesan administration over to the laity; have big corporations assume control of Catholic schools; force all clergy to lead more simple lifestyles; ordain women deacons; and adopt a kind of ecumenism that practically erases all denominational differences.

The protagonist of this story is newly ordained Bishop David Campbell. He sets out to change his diocese into a kinder, gentler institution, but in so doing, he angers conservatives who report him to the archbishop, the pope and the curia.

An unusual and rather preposterous twist in the story is the notion that the pope is a personal friend of Bishop Campbell and encourages his violation of church laws.

When members of Vatican offices move to discipline the maverick bishop, the pope protects him. In fact, the Holy Father tries to deflect the

charges against his friend by promoting him to archbishop. But this only stems the tide for a while, so the pope transfers him to a poor and insignificant diocese in the Southwest.

Meanwhile, a good friend of Archbishop Campbell succeeds him as bishop of his former diocese and, in due time, becomes an archbishop and later cardinal. Then Campbell's friend the pope dies, and the College of Cardinals gathers to elect a new pope.

After several votes, the cardinals become hopelessly deadlocked. Surprise! Campbell's successor offers his name as a candidate for the papacy. Another surprise! Before he died, the late pope secretly had made the exiled Archbishop Campbell a cardinal.

Cardinal Campbell is elected pope and, during his installation as the new Holy Father, he notices Joshua watching from the congregation.

Strange strange episodes, indeed, have occurred in the process of selecting new popes. But the incidents depicted in this story could not happen today, nor is it likely that change in the church would occur so quickly and dramatically.

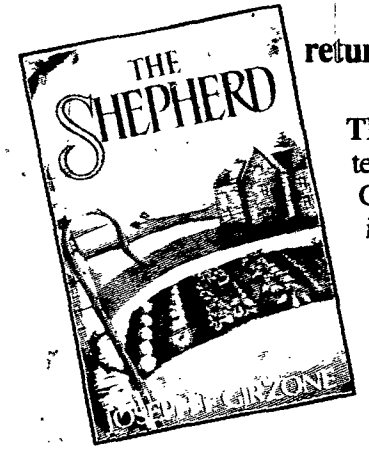
The best way to become acquainted with the real Jesus remains reading the four Gospels.

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