

Homage to Sherlock Holmes Characterizations lift Disney film above par

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — The 1986 animated Sherlock Holmes caper, *The Great Mouse Detective*, is being re-released by Disney as *The Adventures of the Great Mouse Detective*.

Basil of Baker Street (voice of Barrie Ingham), mousedom's answer to Sherlock Holmes, is pressed into service by kindly Dr. Dawson to help a little girl mouse rescue her toy-maker daddy from the evil clutches of Professor Ratigan (voice of Vincent Price).

The story moves leisurely from Basil's below-stairs digs at Holmes' home to Queen Victoria's Buckingham Palace, where the basement Mouse

Queen is in danger of being usurped by that rat Ratigan.

The animation is par for the course, but the carefully developed characterizations are charming throughout, down to such whimsical throwaways as a tap-dancing octopus. Price brings great vocal range and expressiveness to his role as the evil professor.

And even though it's no *Beauty and the Beast*, the movie's amusing take-offs on Sherlock Holmes may entertain otherwise restless parents.

The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is G — general audiences.



The Walt Disney Company
Basil of Baker Street and his admiring assistant search for a clue to the mysterious disappearance of Victorian England's master toy maker in *The Adventures of the Great Mouse Detective*.

Book offers fanciful but inspirational Marian insights

The *Life of Mary as Seen by the Mystics*, compiled by Raphael Brown; Tan Books and Publishers, (Rockford, Ill., 1951); 264 pages; \$12.50.

By Father John J. Philipps
Guest contributor

The Life of Mary as Seen by the Mystics is a compilation of private revelations experienced by four women from four different periods of history. Two of the "mystics" are canonized saints (Bridget of Sweden, d. 1373, and Elizabeth of Schoenau, d. 1164) and two have been declared venerable (Anne Catherine Emmerich, d. 1824, and the Spanish Mary of Agredo, d. 1665).

The compiler, Raphael Brown, makes no claim to any historical accuracy in the mystics' recounting of Mary's life. He admits that none of them was particularly competent in theology and that nothing in his collection should be interpreted as an official church position.

This reprint of a 1951 work — with no introductory explanation for its curious re-appearance now — can be read for entertainment, piety, curiosity, or as an adjunct to the study of mysticism. It is doubtful that it will contribute substantially to one's grasp of Mariology. Though some of the anecdotes about Mary are quite charming, many of them are difficult to take seriously from a biblical or theological perspective.

So enraptured are the mystics by Mary's holiness, they seem blinded to Our Lady's humanness. Baby Mary is described as a child who never cries, always has a pleasant countenance (though "mixed with gravity and a certain majesty"), who eats less than other children and sleeps less, so that she can spend more time in prayer. She could have talked quite clearly and intelligently as a baby, they say, but out of modesty and submission to the God's will, she refrained from speaking until she was a year-and-a-half old. They behold her throughout her life constantly surrounded by angels, who sweetly help her with her housework and frequently run errands for her, as when they dispatch her freshly baked bread to the imprisoned John the Baptist.

In spite of its plentiful helpings of pietistic bonbons, the work does have qualities of high inspirational value. The chapter on Mary assisting in the public life of Jesus provides a superb companion piece to the great Marian teaching of Vatican II and "Mary, Mother of the Church."

Nor could one find a Lenten meditation more moving than the verbatim account of the Sorrowful Mother describing her Son's passion and death to the Swedish Bridget. The book's strongest feature, however, is found in its foreword and introduction concerning private revelation and the Chris-

tian believer. In times abundant with "seers" and "visionaries," a healthy dose of official church teaching on this matter is welcome and needed.

If one reads *The Life of Mary as Seen by the Mystics* — and certainly with its introduction — not as Mary's "biography," but as private perceptions of her derived from the meditation, the creativity, imagination, and, in some cases,

the plausible private revelations of four holy women in four very different periods of church history, it can be a helpful spiritual aid.

It is one best kept out of the reach of homilists, catechists and small children, however. Read only as directed.

Father Philipps is pastor of St. Bridget/St. Joseph Church in East Bloomfield.

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