

Ivy will poison its viewers

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — The once fresh-faced kid of E.T. fame, Drew Barrymore becomes a murderous teenage home-wrecker in the lurid melodrama *Poison Ivy* (New Line).

Moving into the mansion of school-mate Sylvie (Sara Gilbert), Ivy quickly charms Sylvie's invalid mom (Cheryl Ladd) and tempts her hapless dad (Tom Skerritt). Ivy sees her chance to have it all by killing off mom and seducing dad. The one thing Ivy hasn't planned on is Sylvie's equally violent reaction. Eventually, everyone is dead — physically or spiritually.

Director Katt Shea's thriller makes the most of moody visuals since there's little else to offer.

Following her publicized battle against addiction, Barrymore, now 17,

adds nothing to her image with this role. Other lead roles also are pathetic. Ladd's character is stuck in bed musing about suicide, while Skerritt is torn between longing for Ivy and his next bottle of booze.

The script expects viewers to believe that Ivy can move right into a couple's home, spend all their money and seduce the husband on the bed where his wife lies sleeping. The film lacks any moral perspective — and there's no lack of camera pans up and down Barrymore's nubile body.

A real rash of poison ivy would be preferable to this trash.

Due to several adulterous encounters with brief nudity, occasional violence, alcohol abuse and some rough language, the USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.



Kimberly Wright/New Line Cinema
Cooper (Sara Gilbert, left) and Ivy (Drew Barrymore) thumb a ride in the suspense thriller *Poison Ivy*.

Talbot's reflections on the beatitudes challenge readers to think

Blessings: Reflections on the Beatitudes, by John Michael Talbot; Crossroad, (New York, 1991); 130 pages; \$8.95.

By E. Leo McMannus
Guest contributor

For a short paperback, this book on the beatitudes is mightily and designedly discomfiting. Unashamedly. Unabashedly. Unequivocally.

That is because the author — a convert from evangelical Protestantism to Catholicism, a country-rock musician

whose albums have sold over a million copies, and founder of a lay Franciscan community in Arkansas — wants to prod, stimulate and eventually encourage us.

He does this by spinning out of his own deep meditations stirring thoughts. He does it, too, by asking some penetrating questions in this decade of evangelization.

"Where are the St. Francis of our era?" he asks. "Where are the Simon Peters who will leave everything in order to bring the gospel to all? I will

tell you where they are. They are reading these words right now. You are the ones. You are the St. Francis. You are the Simon Peters. You are the ones who have it within yourself to change the world for Christ in the last decade of this millennium. The question is ... will you?"

In our richly materialistic culture — where *numero uno* is the focus of so many of our concerns — he requests that we "live simply so others might simply live." Then the author suggests that we further discriminate: "Is it a want or a need?" he asks.

His individual chapters on the Eight Beatitudes, averaging 12 pages each, are brief but replete with his personal observations on relevances that we often tend to overlook. Perhaps the extent of his emphases may be measured by the relative length of his chapters.

The longest, 17 pages, is concerned with the First Beatitude on poverty of spirit, and the next longest, 15 pages, deals with the sixth — on purity of heart.

Interspersed throughout are trenchant comments on compassion, independence and codependence as abuses of interdependence, pollution in today's society, seeing God in the faces of all people, and forgiveness as "one of the greatest expressions of love."

His accentuation of the positive is refreshing.

"I would rather touch on some positive principles that help to unite the heart in Christ and Christ alone. The first is this: if you want to stop doing the don'ts, get busy doing the dos. If

you spend your time doing the dos, you simply won't have time to do the don'ts. There are so many challenges that face the true disciples of Jesus in this world. If you face even just a few of them, believe me, it will demand so much of your time in positive things, you simply won't have time for the negative."


The author is at his best when he disturbs our complacency and discomferts us with his vigorous questions.

"Much of what has been said in this book," he says toward the end of his reflections on the Eighth Beatitude, "challenges the essential upbringing and sociological conditioning of being an American ... Are we American Christians, or Christians in America? American Catholics or Catholics in America?"

How about that for pondering? The author does not end the book with an open-ended question but with an assertion. For him the way of the beatitudes is the way of love, the way of mystery, the way of paradoxes, "where we find wealth in poverty, deeper joy in sorrow, glory in meekness, wholeness in righteous holiness, justice in mercy, clarity in purity of heart, equality in peacemaking, and final victory even in persecution."

That way, of course, is Christ's way. So, for a read that is brief as well as good, simply written as well as profound, and inexpensive as well as personally profitable, *Blessings: Reflections on the Beatitudes* is the book for you.

McMannus, a professor emeritus of English, lives in Venice, Fla.



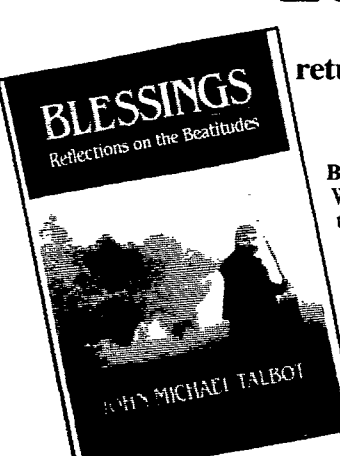
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JOHN MICHAEL TALBOT

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BLESSINGS (Reflections on the Beatitudes) by John Michael Talbot. What the Ten Commandments are to the Old Testament, so the Beatitudes are to the New Testament. They are at the core of Jesus' teachings, and at the heart of the New Covenant. Not unlike the Beatitudes themselves, *Blessings* speaks directly to the heart and soul, and both comforts and encourages us to live out the gospel of Jesus in our daily life.

"The Beatitudes," writes John Michael Talbot, "lead us to the way of the cross and to a new way of freedom. They help us to find wealth in poverty, deeper joy in sorrow, glory in meekness, justice in mercy, clarity in purity of heart, equality in peacemaking, and final victory even in persecution." — Crossroad • New York

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