

Inspiration abounds in City of Joy

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — A disillusioned American doctor travels to India to re-discover his humanity in the *City of Joy* (TriStar).

The sprawling movie is a twin character study — of alienated ex-surgeon Max Lowe (Patrick Swayze) and impoverished family man Hasari Pal (Om Puri).

Pal rescues Lowe, who has been left without a passport and bruised after being mugged on the streets of Calcutta. The pair end up at the City of Joy clinic run by an overworked Englishwoman, Joan (Pauline Collins), who immediately tries to persuade the doctor to help out. Lowe just wants out, but — lacking a passport — reluctantly agrees to volunteer for a few weeks.

Meanwhile, Pal gets work pulling rickshaws and moves his family into the City of Joy area. Unashamed to be a "human horse," he pays the local godfather (Shyamanand Jalan) and his viciously criminal son (Art Malik) for the privilege. When the son demands ever higher protection money from Joan and the rickshaw pullers, Lowe is stirred into action and inspires Pal to lead the resistance.

In bringing Dominique Lapierre's 1985 novel to the big screen, director Roland Joffe (*The Mission*, *The Killing Fields*) vividly contrasts Lowe's spiri-



Patrick Swayze stars as an American doctor who finds purpose, meaning, love and fulfillment in perhaps the most impoverished place on earth, the Calcutta slum known as the City of Joy.

tual desperation with the material desperation of Calcutta's poor. Both come out winners in this inspirational story. Even with a somewhat simplistic ending, this movie is nonetheless dramatically satisfying.

Stretching his range as an actor, Swayze is at times hard-put to accommodate the transformation from burned-out to heroically alive again. Renowned Indian actor Puri, however, expertly conveys his character's anxiety, sense of honor and burgeoning courage. Collins' role is a mixed bless-

ing as she veers from preachy self-righteousness to stunning tolerance.

More interesting than Lowe's predictable metamorphosis is the movie's grounding in Third World realities. Shot on the teeming streets of Calcutta, the movie captures the throbbing underbelly of the city with petty crooks and spurned lepers.

Pal and Lowe come to symbolize differing Eastern and Western attitudes — passive resignation versus American aggressiveness — which, when met and merged, produce uni-

versal emotions that evoke the resiliency of the human spirit. That's a tall order for any movie, and *City of Joy* is admirable for both trying and in large part succeeding.

Due to brief violence and mild sexual innuendo, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Book allows reader to ponder correct direction in life

The Heart's Journey Home, by Nicholas Harnan, M.S.C.; Ave Maria Press, (Notre Dame, Ind., 1992); 162 pages; \$6.95.

By Bishop Dennis W. Hickey

The author of *The Heart's Journey Home* uses the metaphor of a trip to develop his theme: "Life is a journey which began at the moment of our conception, and continues until the moment of our death. He (God) now walks with us every step of the way and offers us an experience of growth full of faith, hope and love."

Father Harnan distinguishes two sets of roads in the book: the limited access thruways and secondary highways in neighborhoods and rural set-

tings. The latter routes are more productive since they draw us toward the heart of life.

Examples are cited from secondary routes, laid mostly in Ireland, to illustrate how many of life's problems can be resolved. The tales are fascinating even though some are not altogether effective in making the point.

Clearly written and easy to understand, each chapter begins with a short story from which the thrust of the particular section emerges. Implementing action steps are briefly presented with a concluding story.

Each chapter is followed by exercises in which the reader is directed to work on his own experiences.

I found the chapter entitled "Cultivating the Good Parent" especially

challenging. A person need not be a parent to profit from this section. Anyone who serves remotely in a supervisory capacity can find helpful insights.

The faith-filled Christian and the trained psychologist can be detected speaking in each paragraph. Such qualities as patience, kindness and self-discipline are highlighted as characteristic of the good parent.

Although these traits are not novel or startling, Father Harnan presents them in a most appealing and attractive manner. It is comforting to read: "The good parent dimension is not developed once and for all. Rather, it is a growth process that will continue until the day we die."

While the book is helpful and inter-

esting, some of the stories seem contrived. The reader must study carefully those chapters to discover the relationship between the tale and the lesson. This does not detract greatly from the overall thrust of the work, but it does lessen one's initial enthusiasm for the book.

The author beautifully encapsulates his purpose in the words: "It is not a question of how much of the road we have traveled. Rather it is a question of whether or not we are facing in the right direction. God, in creating us, put us on the right road. Some of us, however, might need to check whether we are going in the right direction."

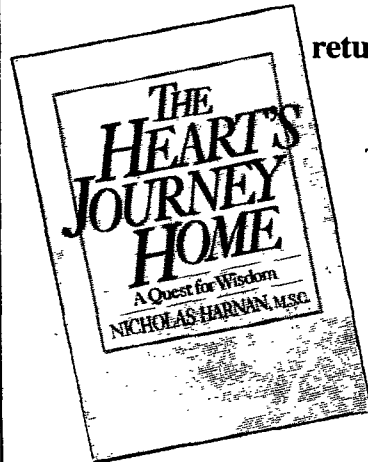
The Heart's Journey Home is an effective tool in determining if we are correctly following the traffic signs.

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