

Bad humor merits early retirement for Folks

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Tom Selleck portrays the hard-pressed son in *Folks!* (20th Century Fox), giving an unfunny spin on how to deal with aging parents.

Long neglectful of elderly Ma (Anne Jackson) and Alzheimer-stricken Pa (Don Ameche), John (Selleck) guiltily takes them in after Pa carelessly burns down their trailer home. But wife Audrey (Wendy Crewson) bolts with the kids when Pa's erratic behavior almost gets the tykes run over.

When John loses his job, his folks suggest the answer to his problems. They hate being a burden and he needs money, so why not get them speedily killed and collect half the insurance money?

With dollar signs dancing in her

eyes, John's snarling sister (Christine Ebersole) readily agrees and before long so does John.

Director Ted Kotcheff's contrived comedy treats Alzheimer's disease as one big joke whose cure is sudden death. It just doesn't work. Insulting, too, is John's assumption that leaving his frail folks on an inner-city street corner will guarantee their murders.

Although there are a few pockets of mirthful moments, the humor here is far from folksy.

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



Michael P. Weinstein/20th Century Fox
Tom Selleck (center), Don Ameche and Anne Jackson star in *Folks!*

Jesuit's book complements St. Ignatius' exercises

Finding God in All Things, by William A. Barry, SJ; Ave Maria Press (Notre Dame, Ind., 1991); 140 pages, \$5.95.

By Father Benedict A. Ehmann
Guest contributor

Here we have a book about a book. Its subtitle reads: *A Companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. This brief review must take account of both.

The Spiritual Exercises were hammered out of St. Ignatius' sweat and tears during an eight-month retreat spent — some 450 years ago — in a cave at Manresa, Spain. This retreat transformed him from a dashing cavalier into a *capitano* of Christ the King. For him it was an ordeal of combat, to bring his stubborn ego into obedience to another Self who was taking possession of him.

The exercises are notes taken down during that struggle. They are not a manual of devotion, so much as a series of "regulations," a code of strategy for the waging of the fierce inner war whose issue is eternity.

They add up to a very small volume, a mere booklet of not more than a hundred pages. Their language is spare and elliptical, its meager formulas austere, dry and often abstract. They are meant to be translated into action and reality, such as rules for a game or kitchen recipes. One needs a mentor to help them work.

It is precisely here that Father Barry's book admirably fills the bill. He follows the so-called "Four Weeks" of the exercises exactly, making them come alive with numerous modern examples and parallels. Still, he's always close to the base-lines of Ignatian spirituality.

The reader is helped to see how all the soul's powers are called into play: heart, intelligence and sensibility. Anyone who follows Father Barry's guidance in the "drills" of the exercises will discover a new field of imagination; a fresh faculty of meditation on the Gospels; and a more real empathy with the Lord. The reader will also hear His words with a clearer ear, tasting the sweetness of His presence more deeply.

Critical to all this, the exercises insist, is prayer which opens the channels of our mental faculties to God's grace, so that our empathy with Christ becomes a sluice through which His thoughts and love flow into ours to make us sharers of His holiness.

Thus out of the shell of lukewarm, casual devotion there emerges an ardent Christian, one truly "born again," to whom at last the Lord becomes

more real than anything else.

All in all, Father Barry's new book is a gem amply reflecting the facets of Ignatian spirituality. I found the following sections especially luminous: chapter 2, "Grounded in God;" chapter 9, "Discipleship;" and chapter 11, "Finding God in All Things."

Whether you use this for a full-scale, 30-day retreat, or a short one over a week or weekend, this little manual will make a wise, genial companion for the journey. In addition, it can be just as helpful for a private retreat over the course of your daily routine, setting aside a little quiet each day to give yourself to its guidance.

In fact, I plan to take it with me on the annual Priests' Retreat this month — for a second and deeper reading.

The retired Father Ehmann lives at Holy Apostles Church in Rochester.

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FINDING GOD IN ALL THINGS—
(A companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius)
William A. Barry, S.J. creates the perfect guide for the contemporary practice of the traditional retreat. Although few people have ever heard of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, many have felt their influence through parish missions or retreats. Many others think of them as something esoteric reserved only for religious or for those who can get away on retreat for an extended time. William Barry dispels this image. He leads us easily through the Exercises, guiding us through Ignatian terminology and procedure. He shares his unique understanding of the dynamic of the Exercises, showing how they can be used to benefit the ordinary person's relationship with god. —AVE MARIA PRESS

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