

Iceman comedy witless; convent caper offers laughs

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Two high school students discover a preserved iceman and pass him off as an exchange student from Estonia in *Encino Man* (Hollywood).

That's about the sum total of the plot in director Les Mayfield's witless comedy of teenage antics.

Sean Astin and Pauly Shore are kooky enough as the leads to appeal to adolescents while iceman Brendan Fraser had little dialogue to memorize in his prehistoric role.

After assorted forgettable mini-adventures, they end up at the prom where the high school bully (Michael DeLuise) gets his comeuppance and everyone parties happily ever after.

Although teenagers may relate to the high-spirited shenanigans, this movie is a harmless, one-joke comedy that runs about as long as the Stone Age. All others, prepare for a drawn-out affair with few chuckles.

Because of minor fisticuffs and very mild sexual innuendo, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.



Luke Wynne-Hollywood Pictures
The Stone Age meets the rock age when two high school buddies, Stoney (Pauly Shore, left) and Dave Morgan (Sean Astin, right), dig up a frozen iceman (Brendan Fraser) while excavating a pool in the yard.

Sister Act

If you can believe Whoopi Goldberg as a cloistered Carmelite nun, then she's managed to pull off her *Sister Act* (Touchstone).

And an act it is, since Deloris (Goldberg) is hardly a candidate for the nunnery. She has a married boyfriend she's ready to ditch, gangster Vince LaRocca (Harvey Keitel), who owns the Reno casino in which she sings. Her decision to leave him becomes a run for her life when she witnesses a

mob rub-out he ordered.

Until she can testify, friendly Lt. Souther (Bill Nunn) suggests a novel hideout — a San Francisco convent.

Mother Superior (Maggie Smith) welcomes Deloris with clenched teeth, handing her their traditional garb and introducing her as Sister Mary Clarence to the other unsuspecting sisters, who don't venture beyond the convent garden onto the unsafe streets.

While feisty Deloris is hard-put to observe Mother Superior's demands of silence and fasting, she's dynamite in the choir. Singing "with an attitude," she nudges the sisters and soon she has them pulling in crowds to Sunday Mass with upbeat pop songs like *I Will Follow Him*, whose romantic lyrics take on higher meaning.

Before long the sisters start reaching out into the neighborhood with a soup kitchen, day care center and social activities.

But when Deloris is kidnapped by LaRocca's goons, it's a case of nuns on

the run in raucous Reno to rescue their beloved impostor.

With much good-natured humor, director Emile Ardolino treats his sisterly subjects as comic figures who are also spirited, caring individuals. This may be a tad patronizing, but the sisters' commitment and enthusiasm for the spiritual life shines through. In addition, communal living is positively portrayed.

What's more, the movie is a lot of fun and a perfect fit for Goldberg's natural sassiness. Her comic delivery gives new meaning and extra edge to the phrase, "Bless you."

Sister Act may not quite be heaven-sent, but its appeal is Catholic with a big and little "c."

Due to references to an extramarital affair and brief comic violence, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

Father Rohr compilation raises questions about the art of living

Simplicity — the art of living, by Richard Rohr, and translated by Peter Heinegg; Crossroad (New York, N.Y., 1991); 180 pages; \$16.95.

By Father John J. Philipps
Guest contributor

When Richard Rohr was a young priest, his Franciscan superior once advised him, "Richard, keep on making tapes; just don't write any books."

The superior believed that the church's magisterium would need at least 20 years to catch up with his cassettes because they can't call his cassettes heresy.

We are fortunate that Father Rohr did not totally heed the superior's admonition. *Simplicity — the art of living* is a compilation of nine talks the noted speaker, retreat master and spiritual director delivered throughout Germany in 1990.

The book contains such catchy chapter headings as "God the Father — God the Mother," "Getting Rid of the Church," and "What is This 'Women's Stuff?'" but before one hurls *Simplicity* upon a blazing pyre of prohibited

books, I would hope that he or she would let the thought of each and every lecture — as well as the questions and answers that follow it — penetrate the heart deeply.

Then the reader will see an author deeply in love with his church, staunchly loyal to the Gospel it strives to preach, painfully articulate in applying Jesus' teaching to the times.

But prepare to be uncomfortable — for instance, when Father Rohr recalls what a non-Christian once said to him: "Why should we believe in your Christ? You Christians have waged the most wars, you use up the most resources in the world, and you've raped the planet. And then you say you love your poor Jesus. You hate Jesus and only say you love him to fool yourselves."

"I have no answer to this," the priest-author comments.

Simplicity has the ring of an Amos, Isaiah or Jeremiah. It calls us to a true art of living, called simplicity.

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

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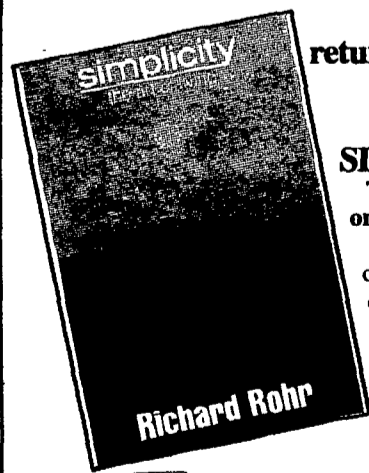
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