

In an evil world, we must ask Lord what to do

By Mariann McCormick
Guest contributor

Lord, what do you want us to do?

The apostles returned to Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension. In Sunday's first reading, we learn that they gathered together in an upper room and devoted themselves to constant prayer.

Lord, what do you want us to do?

Surely, they were confused, as years of ministry were condensed into a few short weeks of extremes: tragedy and triumph, fear and elation. Although no longer terrified, they were still perplexed. Jesus had returned to them, only to leave again.

In the Gospel, John repeats Jesus' prayer over them, consecrating them to the father and entrusting to them his message. He closes with the words, "I am in the world no more, but these are in the world as I come to you."



And indeed, they were in the world — one filled with injustice and rampant with inhumanity, where any reasonable person had to wonder if Christ's message of peace and love could ever conquer rage and violence.

The people gathered that week were not the models for a million statues nor even yet the apostles of a thousand converts. These were men and women shaken by events whose meaning and purpose were still unclear, who wondered about their future and that of their community.

So, as a community, they turned to

prayer.

Lord, what do you want us to do?

The question echoes down the centuries.

Today, we gather as a people of God, initiated through our baptism into Christ's life and work. Like the disciples in this week's readings, we live in a world of rage and violence. We wonder for our future and that of our church. And, like the disciples, we gather as a faith community to manifest Christ's presence.

We are called to witness God's ongoing work in the world and are strengthened to do it through the sharing of bread and wine. Although fear impedes us today just as it did the disciples in the days before that first Pentecost, it is unlikely that the coming week will find any of us so dramatically metamorphosed as were the apostles.

Our fears are less explicit. We are not at risk of suffering, as the word is used by Peter in his exhortation in the second reading. We are not even at the risk of the suffering that is going on at this minute in countries where cultures clash and murder in God's name.

The greatest risk we face in our society as Christians is that of ridicule. Yet that is often enough to cripple our witness to God's work in the world today. We let another's opinion become our reality. And, in so doing, we turn away from Christ's reality in our midst.

Lord, what do you want us to do?

Today, as it was then, our faith community gathers in prayer to await the gentle stirrings of the Spirit responding in our hearts.

McCormick is a member of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission.

Indian Summer charming; Boy's Life drama riveting

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — The teen coming-of-age movie repeats itself when eight adults return to their summer camp and act like kids all over again in Touchstone's *Indian Summer*.

The movie marks aging camp owner Uncle Lou's (Alan Arkin) swan song, so he invites back his favorite kids from the camp's heyday in 1972 for a weeklong reunion before shutting down the cabins for good.

Jock Jamie (Matt Craven) arrives sporting years-younger fiancé Gwen (Kimberly Williams) on his arm. Whiny Brad (Kevin Pollak), antsy Jennifer (Elizabeth Perkins) and rebel Jack (Bill Paxton) are still single.

Kelly (Julie Warner) and Matthew (Vincent Spano) have married in the interim, but he is feeling unsettled both at home and in his business partnership with Brad. Finally, Beth (Diane Lane) arrives, still grieving over the death of their former camp friend and her husband, Rick.

Over the course of the next few days relationships wither, bloom and spurt new growth in the picturesque setting of Camp Tamakwa, in Canada's Algonquin Provincial Park.

As written and directed by Mike Binder, who attended this camp for 10 summers, the movie is a nostalgia-drenched trip down memory lane.

Although the movie is nowhere as funny as it seems to think it is, viewers will find it pretty hard to leave the theatre without smiling as the funny lyrics of Allan Sherman's classic summer camp song, "Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah," cheerily detail the horrors of life in camp.

Due to brief recreational drug use, an implied sexual encounter and an instance of rough language, 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.

'This Boy's Life'

Author Tobias Wolff proved the pen is mightier than the sword by detailing life with his brutal stepfather in his scathing memoirs, and now *This Boy's Life* emerges as a powerful motion picture from Warner Bros.

The movie begins on a carefree note as 12-year-old Toby (Leonardo DiCaprio) and his divorcee mom, Caroline (Ellen Barkin), motor cross country seeking a fresh start. Mom has no skills and is fleeing an abusive boyfriend, which propels them all the way to Seattle in the fall of 1957.

In Seattle, mom is courted by blustering mechanic Dwight (Robert De Niro), who extols the clean living in his rural cabin 100 miles north where



Attila Dory/Touchstone Pictures
Camp Tamakwa alumni (left to right) Jennifer (Elizabeth Perkins), Beth (Diane Lane), Brad (Kevin Pollak) and Jamie (Matt Craven) indulge in a midnight snack as they reminisce about the good old days in *Indian Summer*.

he lives with his three children.

Hoping Dwight will be the father figure rebellious Toby needs, Caroline marries and soon finds out Dwight rules his roost with an iron fist.

Toby at first tries to live up to his stepfather's rigid expectations, but two years of mounting emotional and physical abuse showered on the boy leads him in another direction.

He decides to gain admission to an Eastern prep school, escape being his only hope of survival. Desperate to make her second marriage work, weary Caroline refuses to take sides in their increasingly violent exchanges.

Director Michael Caton-Jones' tough-minded movie pulls no punches

as it gets inside Toby's traumatic coming of age. The title is an ironic variation on *Boy's Life*, the patriotic Boy Scout magazine Toby ogled as his scoutmaster stepfather made a mockery of its ideals.

Outstanding performances make this difficult drama riveting — Barkin's tender, torn mother; De Niro's terrified insecurity only an inch below his savagery; and DiCaprio's multi-layered rendering of a boy negotiating a taut tightrope with no safety net.

Because of physical and verbal abuse, a brief bedroom scene and frequent rough language, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

Profound book awakens meditative wonder in routine, daily activities

Being Home, by Gunilla Norris; Bell Tower Press (New York, N.Y. 1991); 89 pages; \$15.

By Sister Margaret Brennan
SSJ

- Shoveling snow.
- Mending clothes.
- Setting the alarm clock.
- Emptying the garbage.
- Paying the bills.

These events hardly seem the stuff of contemplation. Yet in the hands of psychotherapist-poet-author Gunilla Norris and through photographer Greta Sibley's lens everyday actions and familiar objects such as these become epiphanies of grace and keys to the inner life.

Norris offers 40 brief meditations in this contemporary *Book of Hours*. Each meditation looks at a moment in an ordinary day, peels away the famil-

iar surface, and reveals a simple truth. And so the act of opening a window on a winter morning becomes a prayer to be jolted into joy during the day; dusting the furniture is a meditation on textures and forms; reading the newspaper is an invitation to be conscious of others' burdens; paying the bills is a reminder that we are dependent, always, on "services rendered" by others.

If all of this sounds sweet, it isn't, believe me. The concept is firmly rooted in our spiritual traditions in prayer: the practice of the presence of God, the sacrament of the present moment, the Morning Offering. With simple, direct language Norris guides us in an exercise of being alive in the world we see and aware of another realm that often seems beyond our grasp. Her purpose is to lead us to that depth within us that is, simply, God.

The photographs are both integral to the text and parallel as a visual text. While Norris uses metaphor to jog us into seeing familiar things in a new way, photographer Sibley uses angle, perspective and chiaroscuro. A collection of mugs in a wooden cupboard, the pattern of an uneven hardwood floor, a pile of pine needles, a jumble of socks, a jug of water by a window — each becomes a sort of visual metaphor that helps us to focus.

Each says, "Look. Really look at this thing that you see every day. Turn it around. Hold it up to the light. See how the shadows play on it. It has a meaning for you."

I only regret that this book's small size does not present Sibley's photographs in the dimensions they deserve. One almost needs a magnifying glass to see the fine details.

What I like best about these medita-

tions is that they do not stop with the 40 between the book's covers. I find myself, having practiced with these prayers, thinking of my own, being attentive to the ordinary actions, daily rituals in my own world.

Turning the key in the car ignition and the key in our lock at home now say something to me about mobility and stability; working a crossword puzzle reminds me of the patience and faith it takes to make sense of the difficult things that happen; listings in the TV tab speak of the co-existence of good and evil, darkness and light, in our culture.

In other words, the book works. Beautifully.

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