

'Rookie' lacks punch

Could be hit with children

By Henry Herx and Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — The boyhood fantasy of playing for a major league baseball team comes to life in *Rookie of the Year* (20th Century Fox).

In this fanciful but ragged comedy, Henry Rowengartner (Thomas Ian Nicholas), a 12-year-old little league scrub, becomes an ace pitcher with the Chicago Cubs after his broken arm heals in a fashion enabling him to throw 103-mph fastballs.

Of course, he gets some help from the Cubs' ailing star pitcher, Chet Steadman (Gary Busey), who happens to be sweet on Henry's single mom, Mary (Amy Morton).

The only fly in the ointment is that Mary's current beau, Jack (Bruce Altman), steps in as Henry's manager and gets carried away with making easy money off his baseball "property."

For the most part, however, the story's focus is on the fun had by a quite ordinary lad who's suddenly made rich and famous beyond his imagination.

While Henry enjoys his new status in the adult world and the adulation of his young peers, he remains relatively unchanged by all the attention and continues his friendships at school much as before.

Director Daniel Stern pins most of the laughs on the incongruity of a youngster competing successfully with big leaguers.

Nicholas is easy to take as the unaffected lad who needs more than a special pitch to hang in there with veteran players twice his size.

Youngsters should enjoy the fun of a



Thomas Ian Nicholas (center) stars as Henry Rowengartner in the Twentieth Century Fox release *Rookie of the Year*.

boy beating adults at their own game.

Given the situation and its rather mechanical scripting by Sam Harper, the humor proves entirely predictable. Adults may see that as a source of disappointment but youngsters are likely to find the fantasy quite enjoyable, if

not fresh and imaginative.

Because of romantic complications, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

Helpful book points to contemporary spiritual guides

Spiritual Guides for Today: Dorothy Day, Karl Rahner, Thomas Merton, Simone Weil, Henri Nouwen, Evelyn Underhill, by Annice Callahan, RSCJ; Crossroad (New York, N.Y.); 176 pages; \$11.95.

By Monsignor William H. Shannon
Guest contributor

Some years ago Karl Rahner made a prophecy that is coming to fulfillment in our time.

"The devout Christian of the future will either be a mystic... or will cease to be anything at all," he said. Christians today are witnessing a transition from a Christianity that was fostered and nourished by all sorts of devotional practices to a way of living the Christian life which sees the need for achieving a deeper consciousness of God's presence in our lives, a clearer realization of our communion with our sisters and brothers, and a strong commitment to work for peace and

social justice in a world that has very little of either.

For many Catholics this mystical or contemplative approach to living Christian faith is something new. We need guides to help us along the road to this kind of spirituality. Annice Callahan has offered six such guides to us: four are Roman Catholic, while the other two are Anglican and Jewish. She provides two American guides, along with one British, French, German, and Dutch.

The author has produced a remarkable book in which she has been able to identify — in relatively short essays — the people she writes about so that we have a sense of coming to know them and what they can contribute to our spirituality, as we seek to live a contemplative life in the midst of inevitable activity and busyness.

The author has written a published dissertation on Karl Rahner and not surprisingly the chapter on him is cen-

tral to her book. A theologian of God's grace and God's nearness to us, Rahner's writings brought people not to the formulas of faith but to the God of mystery. He makes clear that God is not an object of our love alongside of other objects; rather God is the horizon of our love.

This means that the love of neighbor is not in conflict or in competition with the love of God. They are one love. For Rahner grace is not just what we go to church to get; grace is in the world: we find God not only in times of prayer, but also in moments of suffering, service, work, celebration.

I have insufficient space here to discuss each of these guides in detail: Evelyn Underhill, pathfinder for our way to God; Dorothy Day, peacemaker in a nuclear age; Simone Weil, witness to solidarity in affliction; Thomas Merton, a living witness to solitude; and Henri Nouwen, prophet of

conversion.

Two of the "guides," Underhill and Weil, may be less familiar to most readers. Each attracted to Catholicism, but neither taking the final step to enter the church, their stories make fascinating reading. Both were writers. Underhill's *Mysticism* remains a readable classic in mystical literature today. Mysticism for her was not a type of knowledge, but a way of life.

Weil's *Waiting for God and Gateway to God* sum up a spirituality that sought to integrate life with God into a life of service in the world — especially to those most afflicted.

Callahan has written a most helpful book for those who seek a deeper spirituality. Her suggested readings, guides to the guides so to speak, are a valuable help to the reader.

Monsignor Shannon is professor emeritus at Nazareth College of Rochester.

SAT. AUGUST 7

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WED. AUGUST 4

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NOW! FREE CLUBHOUSE ADMISSION & PROGRAM FOR SENIORS EVERY WED.!

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