

Snapper too flippant; S.A.M. too incredible

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

In *The Snapper* (Miramax), director Stephen Frears (*Dangerous Liaisons*, *The Grifters*) makes poor comedy out of an Irish girl's refusal to name the father of her unborn child and the town scandal that it creates.

Dad (Colm Meaney) and mom (Ruth McCabe) are understandably upset when 20-year-old Sharon (Tina Kellegher) announces she is having a baby but can't name — or marry — the father. Her five younger siblings are mostly intrigued by the idea of an infant in their house.

One of dad's drinking buddies, George (Pat Laffan), a middle-aged married man and father of one of Sharon's barfly friends, implies he is the guilty party, then quickly denies it when confronted by her furious dad.

But the gossipmongers have a field day, so Sharon invents a foreign sailor when actually it was her friend's father and they were both so drunk they hardly knew what they were doing. Complicating matters, George leaves his family and foolishly wants Sharon to run off with him while she spurns him, steadfastly refusing to admit to anyone that George is the father.

Her parents stand behind her as scandal swirls around them. By the time the baby is born her family is eager to wel-

come home the child Sharon has flip-pantly named Georgina.

The movie tends to trivialize a serious predicament and fails to entertain as well. Sharon remains stubbornly immature throughout her pregnancy, still drinking and bragging to her girlfriends of a handsome seductor. Her mom wants to tell the younger children what Sharon did is wrong, but more play is given to dad who alternates his pub nights with reading up on pregnancy and sex, thus gaining more insight into Sharon's moods and the wife he had taken for granted. The parents are sympathetic, but the only growth central character Sharon demonstrates is in her midriff.

At least she doesn't consider abortion, although for an Irish Catholic family they seem unconnected to any spiritual considerations.

For those who see beyond the attempt at comedy it can be seen as a cautionary tale about the far-reaching consequences abusing alcohol can have.

But it seems more likely director Frears was just looking for laughs. What he ends up with is less warm hearted family bonding than the nosy neighbors' mean-spirited snickers.

Because of brief bedroom scenes, minor violence, frequent rough language and much heavy drinking, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Associ-



Miramax films

Tina Kellegher and Colm Meaney in *The Snapper*.

ation of America rating is R — restricted.

'Josh and S.A.M.'

A nutty drama if ever there was one is *Josh and S.A.M.* (Columbia), about two unhappy brothers — one of whom is led to believe he is not human.

Treated as nuisances and shuttled between uncaring divorced parents (Joan Allen and Stephen Tobolowsky), Josh (Jacob Tierney), 12, and his 7-year-old brother Sam (Noah Fleiss), are troubled kids who don't get along and don't feel at home in either California or Florida.

Josh, a natural liar, meanly convinces Sam the boy's name means he is a "Strategically Altered Mutant," a U.S. government humanoid weapon programmed to die in a far-off war, unless the "Liberty Maid" Josh has invented can ferret him off to Canada.

As the boys head back to California, Josh unwittingly convinces a stranger (Chris Penn) he is the man's son, but when the man realizes he's been had he gets violent and the boys knock him out. They are sure they've killed him so decide to run off to Canada by driving the man's car.

En route they pick up a runaway teen (Martha Plimpton), who

inexplicably says yes when Sam asks if she is his Liberty Maid.

After reaching the border the brothers learn they are not killers and begin to bond — at least they have each other.

The theme of neglected children of divorce falling into jeopardy gets lost in the increasingly bizarre narrative of Frank Deese's contrived screenplay.

The boys' performances are affecting and the parents are appropriately repelling. But much of this drama is a road movie and the happenings on it strain and crack credibility.

The result is a jumbled and unsatisfying story with its darker elements glossed over by the kids' unbelievable but eventful odyssey.

The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG-13.

Author urges awareness

Meditations use Bible passages

The Way to Love: The Last Meditations of Anthony De Mello, by Anthony De Mello; Doubleday (New York, 1992); 147 pages; \$15.

By David and Julianne Palma
Guest contributors

The challenge of the Advent season is to wake up and become aware. In his last book, Anthony De Mello, SJ, a Native American, brings this sense of urgency to the Advent theme of awareness. He shows the reader that a life without awareness is a life that will never know happiness, love or the Kingdom of God.

To explore his themes, De Mello uses a series of meditations, each several pages long and based on a Scripture passage.

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Many of them, in a gentle and non-judgmental manner, lay out explicit instructions for how to become more aware. His goal is to increase the reader's consciousness of habitual ways of looking at people and things. The reader is encouraged to look deeply at his or her beliefs, ideas, fears and attachments because one invests too much trust in them.

For example, when the author writes about happiness, he insists that it resides within each of us. It is our attachments, which eventually become addictions, that block our ability to feel the happiness which is our birthright.

An attachment is "an emotional state of clinging caused by the belief that without some particular thing or some person, you cannot be happy." (Page 21) Only when people become aware that their attachments do not create happiness can they begin to understand that their lifestyle will inevitably lead to unhappiness.

"... your mind is creating unhappiness all the time. Drop this unhappiness of your mind and the happiness that has always been yours will instantly surface." (Page 20)

The style is extremely readable, but almost deceptively so. It would be easy to breeze through this slender volume in two sittings. This would be a mistake, however, because the material is very dense and somewhat repetitive. The best approach would be to read a chapter each day, and then reflect on it and savor it.

While he doesn't employ the jargon of the discipline, the book is highly theological. However, De Mello presents the material in such a conversational manner that the reader feels as if she or he is being addressed individually by a close friend.

As suggested by the title, a key theme is love. The title does not mean "how to love" but "the path to love. Again, the route lies through awareness. De Mello insists that it is impossible to love someone whom we do not really see.

"What is love? It is a sensitivity to

Johnny Cash to sing Dec. 14

ROCHESTER — Legendary country singer Johnny Cash will bring his music to the Eastman Theater, 26 Gibbs St., at 8 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 14, in a Christmas show to raise funds for the Sisters of Mercy Founders Club.



The performance marks the 25th anniversary of the Founders Club, a not-for-profit organization raising money for the continuing education of the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester.

Cash will be accompanied by his wife June Carter, a noted country performer in her own right, and members of his family, all of whom will perform nuggets from the family's musical goldmine, as well as classic Christmas songs.

Cash revolutionized country music in the 1950s when he stripped his arrangements of just about everything that characterized country at that time — steel guitar, fiddles, piano and background singers. His deep-throated bass was often backed only by guitars and bass, and minimal drumming, when he sang such

early hits as "Folsom Prison Blues" and "I Walk the Line."

One of Sun Record's famed foursome in the 1950s — along with Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Elvis Presley — Cash has been credited along with those performers and such black stars as Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Little Richard for also

helping to invent rock 'n' roll. His sparse style has influenced rockers from Bob Dylan to Bruce Springsteen.

In 1993, *Zooropa*, the most recent release from one of the world's biggest rock bands, the Irish quartet U2, concludes with *The Wanderer*, penned by lead singer Bono and sung by the 61-year-old Cash in his inimitable cadence.

Tickets for the Dec. 14 concert are still available at \$29.50, \$26.50, \$23.50 and \$19.50 at the Founders Club Box Office at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse, 1437 Blossom Road. Special patron seating is also available. Phone orders are being accepted at 716/288-4817.

every portion of reality within you and without, together with a wholehearted response to that reality." (Page 111)

He concludes with the assertion that it is only through love that we approach the Kingdom, which has been within us all along. He uses a powerful analogy of a sightseeing bus touring a gorgeous countryside with the windows covered so that the passengers remain caught up in their own affairs within.

The reader is left with the absolute conviction that to continue living in the

socially acceptable way is not only foolish, it's sinful. De Mello is careful, however, to avoid that harsh label. He asserts that people's negative behaviors are only caused by mistaken beliefs and a lack of awareness.

There's that word again.

What better way to start the liturgical New Year than with a whole new way of looking at your world? Or if you prefer to wait until the calendar New Year, this little volume is just the right size for anyone's Christmas stocking.