

PARENTING

Movies target family viewers

By Catholic News Service
NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are home videocassette reviews from the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting. Each videocassette is available on VHS format. Theatrical movies on video have a U.S. Catholic Conference classification and Motion Picture Association of America rating. All reviews indicate the appropriate age group for the video audience.

"Casper" (1995)

A lonely 13-year-old (Christina Ricci) is befriended by the cuddly ghost of the title when her widowed therapist dad (Bill Pullman) is hired to coax some menacing spirits out of a mansion rumored to be hiding buried treasure. Director Brad Silberling pumps up the cuteness factor, but the narrative is thin. Some comic violence, a couple of profanities and a crude expression. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

"A Little Princess" (1995)

Delightful family movie from the Frances Hodgson Burnett novel in which a British widower sent to the front in World War I places his young daughter (Lacey Matthews) in a private school in New York City where she befriends a servant girl (Vanessa Lee Chester), then becomes one herself when her father is reported dead, leaving her penniless and at the mercy of the headmistress (Eleanor Bron). Directed by Alfonso Cuarón. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is G — general audiences.

"Cinderella" (1950)

Disney animated feature tells the traditional tale of the downtrodden stepdaughter who leaves her chores to attend the prince's ball in a pumpkin coach and shod in glass slippers. Directors Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske and Clyde Gissel pace the proceedings with comedy. Enjoyable entertainment for all the family. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is G — general audiences.

[For the latest film reviews, call CNS's new movie review line, 1-800-311-4222.]

Kids Answers

- 3 Andrew
- 2 Esau
- 1 Cain
- 6 Benjamin
- 7 Eliab
- 4 John
- 5 Mary

Listening to children is an art

A few years ago, at a loud and festive family gathering, my 6-year-old nephew, Ray, stood and announced, "I have something very important to say!"

By the time all the adults had settled down and were ready to listen, Ray was so upset that he forgot what he was going to say and left the room in tears.

I often wonder what gem we missed that day. Just a few weeks later our family was gathered together once more for my brother's wedding and Ray noticed some people quietly praying before Mass began. My husband asked Ray if he knew what the people were doing. "Sure," Ray replied, "they are talking to God in their heads."

There is so much to learn when we practice the fine art of listening to our children. When we do, we are showing them that they have dignity and self-worth, that they are children of God.

Parents who listen carefully to their child's thoughts, hopes and fears are helping to build their child's confidence and self-esteem. They are also privileged to catch a glimpse of their child's inner world, a place without cynicism, hatred, jealousy and prejudice.

I believe this is why Jesus said, "I assure you that whoever does not accept the reign of God like a little child shall not take part in it." It seems to me that if we are really listening to what Jesus is saying, we should be learning everything we can about being like the little children.



family matters

By EILEEN MARX

The story of Jesus embracing and blessing the children is one of the most revealing moments in the Gospel. St. Mark writes: "People were bringing their little children to him to have him touch them, but the disciples were scolding them for this. Jesus became indignant when he noticed it and said to them, 'Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs.'"

Jesus understood the heart of a child. He delighted in the laughter and the words of children. How Jesus' heart must be breaking as war, poverty, crime and neglect are extinguishing the wonderment, hope and trust of the little children.

Today's news stories from Somalia, Bosnia and our own American cities remind us that not only are our children not listened to, but their basic needs for food, shelter and security are not even being met.

Today's world is also one where life is moving at a breakneck speed. It can be a challenge just to listen within our families. After all, listening takes time, patience and energy, and all are at a premium in our busy lives. A child's question or thought is easily lost somewhere between rushing to get a meal on the table, dropping off a child at day care, hurrying to get to the bank or cleaners, packing the diaper bag, or zipping off to the grocery store.

No one has perfected the art of listening, not even loving parents. But even as we strive to become better listeners, it's just as important not to overindulge our children. They need to learn that mom and dad must have their own time for conversation, chores and relaxation. And yes, it is exasperating at times to listen to children with their endless questions, demands and ramblings. There is at least one moment in every day when we wish our children would be the ones doing the listening. But they are testing us and learning from us.

Through the Gospel of Mark we learn it's crucial to understand and imitate a child's way of seeing the world. Jesus has given us a road-map to the Kingdom of God and if we are to find our way, then we must accept the reign of God like a little child. Perhaps a first step in the right direction is to listen and learn from our children. Because all children, like little Ray, have something very important to say.

A Mother's Day story leads to a new career

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

Eileen Marx has a bishop to blame for her new career.

In 1992, Marx left her job as director of communications for the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., to devote herself full-time to caring for her newborn daughter, Teresa, and her son, Bobby, 2-1/2.

But shortly after she quit, Marx's pastor at that time, Bishop William Curlin — now the Bishop of Charlotte, N.C. — said, "I really think that you need to continue to write once in a while. I think you will have things to say that families need to hear."

Even before she had time to mull over Bishop Curlin's suggestion, Marx received a request from a Catholic newspaper to write a Mother's Day story.

That story became the first installment of "Family Matters," a column currently carried in 18 Catholic newspapers — including, now, the *Catholic Courier*.

In the column, Marx chronicles her attempts to balance career and family — which currently consists of her two children, her husband, Joe, and their dog, Whisper — with a sense of faith. The more than 30 columns she has already written cover such topics as finding time to pray as a family, celebrating children's talents, working through anger in families, dealing with violence and children, and finding one's way on the first day of school.

Marx said Bishop Curlin's suggestion

had hit a responsive chord in her.

"He felt, as I felt, that there was not enough outreach to young Catholic families in the Catholic press," Marx recalled. Parents, she said, weren't finding articles that addressed "all the burdens, stresses and demands going on in their lives."

Still, the idea of writing a column was intimidating.

"I had many sleepless nights," Marx said. "I wondered if I really did have anything to say."

Indeed, she observed, there are still times when she has no idea what to write.

"Every time I sit down to write a column, I pray, 'Okay, God, what am I going to write about?'" Marx said. "The column usually comes from that. Without prayer, the column would be nothing."

To make sure that the columns touch upon issues families are facing today, Marx seeks ideas from a network of friends and neighbors. And after finishing each column, she circulates copies to make sure she is on target. Thus far, the feedback from her network — and readers

— has been positive.

"I get a lot of phone calls and a lot of letters — and they're usually very personal," Marx said.

Of course, with two small children in the house, there are frequent interruptions. School — and a neighbor with whom she swaps babysitting duties — give her some time to work.

Based on her own work experience both outside and at home, Marx recognized that many mothers and parents face similar time pressures.

"I think one of the greatest challenges today is finding the time — whether you are a working mother or a stay-at-home mother — for yourself," Marx said.

In recent months, the writing routine has also been interrupted by the process of selling the family home in Silver Spring, Md., and moving to Lawrenceville, N.J.

"I wrote my last three columns in the car on the way up to New Jersey," Marx said.

All of which sounds like food for future columns.

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