

PARENTING

Films offer fit Easter viewing

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 USCC classification and Motion Picture Association of America rating. Reviews indicate the appropriate age group for the video audience.



"The Easter Story" (1989)

Half-hour animated version of St. Mark's Gospel, recounting events from Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday through his passion, death, resurrection and ascension. The Hanna-Barbera animation is on the same basic level as that of Saturday-morning cartoons, the treatment is reverential and the violence of Holy Week is shown off-screen or from a distance. Appropriate for pre-schoolers and those in the early grades.

"The Fourth Wise Man" (1985)

Adaptation of Henry Van Dyke's short story, "The Other Wise Man," tells of a fourth Magi (Martin Sheen) who's delayed in following the star to Bethlehem, then finally catches up with it in Jerusalem some 33 years later in an encounter which fulfills his life's search for truth. Produced by Paulist Father Ellwood Kieser and directed by Michael Rhodes, the dramatization amplifies the religious dimension of the original and adds some light humor. Family entertainment, with a message of finding fulfillment through helping others.

Children see with unprejudiced eyes

"Why don't I have to go to school today?" my young son Bobby asked me one morning in January.

"Today is a school holiday. It's the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King," I answered him.

"Who is Dr. Martin Luther King and why does he have a very long name?" Bobby pressed on.

I explained to Bobby as simply as I could that a long time ago there were laws that said people who had black skin had to sit in the backs of buses, movie theaters, restaurants and even churches, just because their skin was black. I told him that people were mean to people just because they had black skin. But Martin Luther King believed that everyone should learn to love one another and change the rules. Another man thought Martin Luther King was wrong and he shot him and killed him. Bobby looked at me as if I were making this all up.

"Well, my friends Gerard and Rachel and Rocky and my Aunt Evelyn all have black skin and I think black skin is wonderful," he said earnestly.

"So do I, Bobby," I replied. "It's different now," I continued. "All your friends, of all different colors, can play and go to school together."

Throughout the day, Dr. King's name surfaced in both the simple and profound observations of a child: "What happened to Martin Luther King's children after he died? Did he get shot with a black gun or a brown gun? Even if people hated people with black skin, why did they still have to do mean things to them?"

As I talked with Bobby that day, I realized how racism and prejudice go against a child's natural inclination to embrace people and things that are different. Children are drawn to diversity.



family matters

BY EILEEN MARX

They delight in the colors of the rainbow. A youngster is colorblind when it comes to nursery school playmates.

But somewhere along the way some children get the message that sameness is more desirable than diversity.

As my husband Joe and I talked later that evening, we spoke about how fortunate we both were in having parents who never lectured us about the evils of racism but instead gave witness through their own words and example that prejudice and hatred would not be tolerated in their homes or in their hearts.

As a child I remember my mother and father working on a mayoral campaign for one of the few African-American residents in our town. I also remember hearing many stories over the years of my mother's friendship with her college roommate who happened to be black. The love and respect that they had for people of all cultures, races and faiths flowed from their hearts.

For a few summers my family participated in a program run by Catholic Charities where a 5-year-old boy named Lorenzo from Paterson, N.J., stayed with us for two weeks during the summer. Lorenzo grabbed a piece of all our hearts and forever changed how we looked at racism.

"We got involved in this program," my mother explained, "not because we

thought we were do-gooders but because we thought it would be a real opportunity to show you children that people of other cultures have gifts that will strengthen and enrich your lives. It's a two-way street."

I was 10 years old in 1968 when Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy, another champion of racial justice, were assassinated. I remember being very confused about the bloodshed over race, but I sensed an urgency in my family and in my country that we must never allow hatred and violence to triumph over love and justice.

This month we celebrate Black History Month, and it's tempting to think that we have conquered racism. In many ways, the urgency and the passion of the civil rights movement appear to be gone, but the struggle against racism is far from over.

The KKK still marches in U.S. cities. People in this country still commit unconscionable hate crimes against people of different cultures, races and religions. And the denial of opportunities for African Americans in our society have often resulted in what Washington Cardinal James A. Hickey calls "a new slavery of poverty, unemployment and substance abuse."

As racism grows more insidious, parents have an even greater responsibility to teach their children love, understanding and respect for all people.

But on a sunny, winter afternoon my husband and I watch Bobby and his friends playing happily at the park. We see their wonderful black skin and their wonderful white skin side by side and believe for a moment that a piece of Martin Luther King's dream has become a reality.

Marx lives in Lawrenceville, N.J., with her husband and two children.

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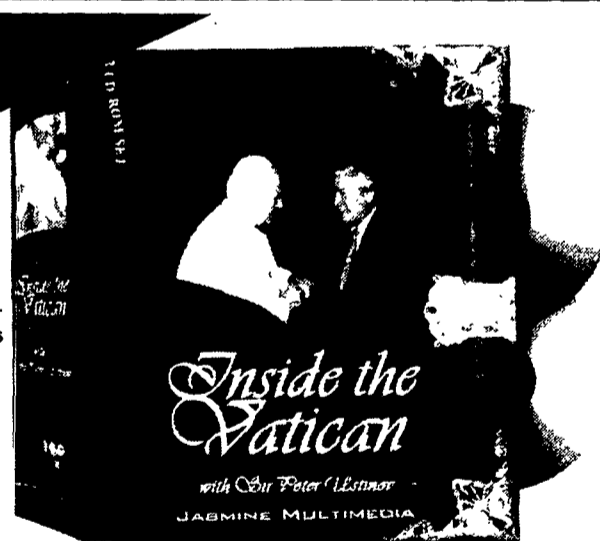
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