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## FEATURE

### **'Peachy' film** tops releases

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

## James and the Giant Peach

America rating.

A 9-year-old orphan living in England escapes two vicious aunts by magically entering a huge peach filled with six insects who become his adopted family as the peach transports them to a new home in New York City. Director Henry Selick combines live action with stopmotion animation in a remarkable adaptation of Roald Dahl's 1961 children's story that may be too sinister and scary for the under-10 set. The USCC classification is A-II – adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG – parental guidance suggest-

#### Kazaam

Trashy fantasy in which a 12-yearold brat (Francis Capra) and a 5,000year-old genie (Shaquille O'Neal) tangle with some thugs running a rap-music racket, after which the boy reconciles with a father he hasn't seen in 10 years and the man his mom plans to marry. The proceedings are noisy and the characters are generally unlikable. Stylized violence, menacing situations, domestic tensions, coarse language and a profanity. The USCC classification is A-II. The MPAA rating is PG. **Independence Day** 

Sci-fi thriller in which alien spaceships level three American cities before the president (Bill Pullman), a computer whiz (Jeff Goldblum) and a Marine pilot (Will Smith) mount a last-ditch effort to disable the spacecraft's shields. The film is powered by an action-packed storyline, spectacular special effects and sympathetic characters. Intense depiction of destruction but little gore, brief. sexual innuendo and minimal profanity. The USCC classification is A-III-adults. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

# Children see 'sad' people about us

"Why is that man so sad?" my 3-yearold niece, Patty, asked her mother as she noticed a small, bearded homeless man while walking to their neighborhood 7-Eleven Food Store.

"He is sad because he doesn't have a home to live in or food to eat," her mother, Allison, answered.

The answer seemed to satisfy Patty, and her mother was relieved that at least this time her inquisitive daughter didn't ask, "Why doesn't he have a home or food?" "This man looks like he could be any

child's grandfather," Allison later told me. "What would I have told her?"

Now each time they walk to the store Patty asks, "Will the sad man be there, or has he found a home yet?"

A few weeks later, my young son Bobby was closely studying a photograph on the front page of our daily newspaper. It was a picture of a child near death, being held by his mother as they waited for food and medicine in a African relief camp. Pointing to the child, Bobby asked, "What happened?"

Another hungry human being, another person in search of a home. How do you explain something to your child that you don't even fully understand yourself? That evening, and every evening since, we have said special intentions during Bobby's prayers for all the boys and girls who are hungry. We also began packing grocery bags of food for our parish's pantry for the poor. I wondered what was registering in the hearts and souls of these young cousins who were learning about the homeless and hungry of the world at such an early age.

For more than 30 years, Robert Coles, a professor of psychiatry and medical humanities at Harvard University, has been recording conversations with children of all faiths and cultures throughout the world. In his fascinating and passionate book, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, Coles explores the unique questions, thoughts and ideas that children have about God and spirituality.

Coles shares a conversation he had with Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, back in the 1950s: "'I think my pilgrimage began when I was a child, when I was 7 or 8 ... I have a memory and to me it's the start of my life, my spiritual journey. I'm sitting with my mother and she's telling me about children like me who don't have enough food - they're dying. I'm eating a doughnut, I think. I ask my mother why other children don't have doughnuts and I do ... I asked her if God knew someone nearby, or if he could help us with our modest doughnut plan - to give to the hungry some of our abundance! ... I was a child with spiritual worries or concerns - and don't we all have them, I hope, and they start earlier





#### By EILEEN MARN than we think.'"

These days the questions from our children about the poor and the oppressed are coming a lot earlier than at 7 or 8 years old. Our society is one where the homeless live in our neighborhoods, the plight of refugees from countries ravaged by war is broadcast nightly on the news and racism at its ugliest is captured for all to see on a few years ago on a home video-

camera in Los Angeles. It seems that we no longer have the luxury of teaching our children about social justice issues when we believe they are ready to grasp the concepts. Even as we are vigilant in shielding our very young children from the violence and pain of the world, there is still so much suffering that we can not always control what they will see. We must always be ready with answers to some of the most difficult questions our children will ever face.

But I believe that when children are taught about the poor, the hungry and the oppressed of the world, their responses are often so compassionate and so genuine. Perhaps it is because they are still so vulnerable themselves that they understand something about those who are the most vulnerable in our society. They know what it is like to be dependent on someone else for food and shelter.

I know many families who take older children to serve at soup kitchens, or to visit nursing homes so



they can begin to learn about the principles of social justice. Many suburban parishes also have exchanges with city parishes so people in both settings have the opportunity to be exposed to different cultures and different ways of life. I believe that the real hope for restoring peace and compassion to our world is to teach children at an early age that Jesus loves the poor and the oppressed, and that when we take care of them, we are taking care of Jesus too.

In early June, a homeless man was found dead in a creek at the park where Bobby and Patty play pirates and look for buried treasures. It could have been Patty and Bobby, rather than an early morning jogger, who discovered this "sad man." How easily they could have heard about what happened from other children at the park. And I wondered what I might say to them later, if they began asking questions about this senseless tragedy.

I hope I would have said: "The sad man is happy now because he is with God. At last he has found a home and he will never be hungry again."

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



MONDAY	8		
7:30pm St. Michael's Church	🕹 Corner S. Mai	& Frankiln, Newark	
TUESDAY	р		
10:00 am Our Lady of Perpetual Help C	hurchBingo Pala	ce, Rochester	<b>716-46</b> 7-2725
7:30 pm St. Stanislaus Church		ve., Rochester	<b>716-544-99</b> 51
7:30 pm St. Helens Church	🔆Gates Center B	Singo, Westmar Plaza	<b>716-23</b> 5-1210
7:30 pm St. Francis Xavier	g	nool Hali)(716) 2	88-9700 or 482-3211
WEDNESDAY		· /	<u> </u>
7:30 pm Holy Family Home School Ass	oc.,Water Tower P	ark, Rochester	,
THURSDAY	1		
7:30 pm St. Stanislaus Church		ve., Rochester	<b>716-544-99</b> 51
FRIDAY			
7:30 pm St. Margaret Mary Church			
SATURDAY			n ann an ann an an an an an an an an an
12:30 pm Our Lady of Perpetual Help C	hurchBing	Palace, Rochester	
7:30 pm Good Shepherd Church		ta Rd., Rochester	
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