

FEATURE

Films feature plucky beasts

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.



Fly Away Home

Charming story of a 13-year-old Ontario girl (Anna Paquin) who rescues orphaned wild goslings, then with help from her estranged dad (Jeff Daniels) teaches them to fly so they can migrate south. The film combines captivating nature scenes with a warmly human tale of family bonding. Implied live-in relationship and mild menace. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

Alaska

After their bush-pilot dad (Dirk Benedict) crashes in the Alaskan wilderness, two teens (Thora Birch and Vincent Kartheiser) set out on their own to find him, aided along the way by a plucky polar bear cub. This slow-paced rescue tale contains some strong menace and a crude expression. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

Dragonheart

Tale in which a knight (Dennis Quaid), disillusioned by a tyrannical king, joins with a talking dragon (voice of Sean Connery) to lead a revolt. The story is remarkable for its computer-generated beast, but is otherwise a flat-footed spectacle. Stylized battlefield violence. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Children require roots and wings



"I do it myself!" my young daughter Teresa exclaimed as she stamped her feet and threw herself on the floor. She hopped up, grabbed the white shoe I was attempting to unbuckle for her and

hurled it across the room. As the shoe ricocheted off the couch and hit our dog Whisper, I looked at her in disbelief.

"Don't look at me," she said softly as she turned her cheek away until it rested on her shoulder. She walked over to the shoe, picked it up and unbuckled it — by herself.

A child's need for independence is expressed as subtly as a tiny hand gently urging to be released from a parent's grasp or as emphatically as a 2-year-old's tantrum declaring independence at any price.

Almost from the day we bring our children home from the hospital, we begin the process of celebrating their milestones while mourning the loss of a stage we know they will never return to. After a few months of total dependence, an infant rolls over and realizes she can do something on her own. A toddler takes his first steps and speaks his first words, giving him new ways of self expression. A 3-year-old leaves her parents in the dust as she pedals away on her trike. And when a 6-year-old climbs aboard a big yellow bus on his way to kindergarten, he leaves behind more than his parents standing at the corner bus stop.

As parents, we know intellectually that a significant part of our job description is to provide opportunities and assurances that will foster self-reliant children. But we find ourselves balancing our children's needs for autonomy with our reluctance to let go of our control over their lives. We worry that our children may not be ready for certain changes. And we know we can cause just as much harm when our hovering impedes our children's necessary development. The difficulty for parents of young children is often trying to determine what will be a step forward in a child's independence and what will be a sure way to spend the afternoon in an emergency room.

During the summer season I find it easy to compare the art of parenting with that of kite flying. It's a bit tricky to release the precise amount of string so the kite can get started. Then it takes some skill to catch just the right wind so the kite can soar and reach its highest height. If you hold on too



family matters

BY EILEEN MARX

tightly the kite never flies free. If you hold too loosely, the kite often takes a nose dive.

All children are unique and some are more spirited in asserting their independence than others. Certain stages of child development are more trying as well. I am told by family and friends that the teenage years present the greatest challenge for parenting — knowing when to release more kite string and when to reel it in. Sometimes during these years it seems that the parent-child relationship is held together by nothing more than the string of a kite.

As a teenager, I had some heated arguments with my mother about curfews, dating and parties. I wanted to do "everything else was allowed to do." With great delight one Sunday morning, I pointed out to my mother a fitting quotation that appeared in our church bulletin, "There are two lasting gifts we can give our children: one is roots; the other is wings." Of course my finger immediately pointed to the "wings" as quickly as my mother underlined "roots" with her finger. A few years later, my mother made me an embroidery of that verse. It is still displayed proudly on my kitchen wall. These days, as a mother myself, I find I am more easily directed to the "roots" part of the quotation.

During the times when we get discour-

aged over the power struggles with our kids, it may be helpful to remind ourselves that as God's children we too play down our need for dependence while asserting our independence from him. There are times when we feel we can do just fine on our own. Rather than listening to what God is asking of us, we often stamp our feet and demand to do it our way. As our friends and acquaintances give in to unhealthy behaviors it's easy to shout back at God that "everyone else is doing it."

Like any loving parent, God lays out some simple rules for us. He sets limits and has certain expectations for his children. Like typical children, we break the rules, test the limits and fail to measure up to parental expectations. God gets angry and disappointed when we don't listen and, yes, there are consequences and punishments for our actions. But the parable of the Prodigal Son lets us know that even when we fail miserably on our own, we only need to recognize our shortcomings and ask forgiveness. When we do, we will return to parent's loving arms, welcoming us with indescribable joy! "Let us eat and celebrate because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and is found." (Luke 15: 23-24)

I think the story of the Prodigal Son also says that true independence is being secure in the knowledge that although we live our individual lives, we can't do anything in this world all by ourselves. To know real freedom, we need to recognize the roots of faith, family and community at work in our lives. Only then will we receive the lasting gift of wings that will take us on our own human and spiritual journeys.

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

Diocese to sponsor day of family-centered activities

A family day of music, activities, conversation and prayer will be held from 9:45 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday, March 8, at Gorham Lodge, Onanda Park, Canandaigua.

The Diocese of Rochester is sponsoring the day, "Jesus: The Heart of the Family," for families in Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Wayne and Yates counties. Sessions will focus on finding Jesus in images, stories and prayer.

"This is an opportunity to connect

with other families beyond parish boundaries," said Karen Rinefield, diocesan coordinator of young adult, adult and family faith formation. "Family faith is enhanced by conversation, support, connection to others, and fun."

The fee for the activities, lunch and materials is \$8 per family. For registration or more information, contact the Department of Evangelization and Catechesis at 716/328-3210 or 1-800-388-7177.

Kids' Answers from page 16

1. Peter
2. Exodus
3. Isaac
4. Solomon
5. Luke

secret word: EXILE

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