

# PARENTING

## Videos target kids, families

**NEW YORK (CNS)** — The following are recent videocassette releases as reviewed by the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting. Each videocassette is available on VHS format. Theatrically released films on video carry both a U.S. Catholic Conference classification and Motion Picture Association of America rating. All reviews indicate the appropriate age group for viewers.

### 'Children of Heaven'

Charming subtitled story set in Tehran in which a 9-year-old Iranian boy loses his little sister's only shoes. This mishap forces the two to share wearing his sneakers to school until he learns of a foot race in which the third prize is a pair of new shoes. Director Majid Majidi spins a slender but sweetly evocative tale of genuine childhood stress made bearable by bonds of love and the siblings' generosity to an even-less-fortunate child. Depictions of poverty and brief menace.

The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested (Miramax, rental).

### 'The Prince of Egypt'

The biblical story of Moses (voice of Val Kilmer) is retold in a beautifully crafted animated feature that focuses on the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt and God's selection of Moses to lead them to the Promised Land. Directed by Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner and Simon Wells, the result is an impressive animated spectacle re-creating its biblical-era story in compelling fashion, marred only by the artificiality of Stephen Schwartz's songs. Some emotionally intense, harrowing scenes younger children may find overwhelming.

The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested (DreamWorks, \$26.99).

### 'The Iron Giant'

Absorbing animated adventure about a young boy (voice of Eli Marienthal) trying to protect a towering metal robot from a paranoid government agent (voice of Christopher McDonald) bent on its destruction even if it means blowing up the boy's hometown. Director Brad Bird's tale is both a political allegory adults can enjoy and a gentle story of friendship older children can relate to. Some intense cartoon violence and menace to a child. The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested (Warner, \$22.98).

## Movie sends conflicting messages

By Gerri Pare  
Catholic News Service

**NEW YORK** — "Pokemon: The First Movie" (Warner Bros.) is the latest entry in the kiddy craze for pocket monsters, or its shortcut name of pokemon. The Japanese cartoon TV series has spawned an army of merchandising items including pokemon toys, clothes and trading cards with the animated movie set to further cash in on the fad.

For the uninitiated, pokemons are the size of small balls, but when they open up they transform into colorful creatures little or large. From eggshell babies to snarling dinosaurs, they are ready to do battle with one another as taught by their young human trainers, called pokemon masters.

The human hero of this story is Ash, who aspires to become the greatest pokemon master. His favorite pokemon (there are more than 150 of the critters) is a cute yellow fellow called Pikachu, whose tail can shoot lightning bolts when in combat.

The villain of the piece is a clone of the rarely seen pokemon Mew, created by mad scientists and christened Mewtwo. Enraged to discover he is just an experiment, Mewtwo vows revenge on humans and destroys the lab.

Setting up shop on a remote island, Mewtwo lures Ash and the other pokemon masters to a contest to determine who is the greatest of them all. However, by making stronger clones of the masters' pokemons, Mewtwo actually intends to vanquish and enslave the humans.

Action, as in shoving and stomping, (pokemons can't be killed



but only knocked unconscious) is the meat and potatoes of the movie, which seems like a stretched-out TV cartoon episode.

It's strictly for kids, but its mixed message is problematic. On the one hand, it's all about aggression, but a preachy voice over also intones that violence is wrong and that real strength comes from the heart.

Nonetheless, the fighting continues, building up to an uninspired showdown in which Ash is willing to sacrifice himself to save Pikachu. The filmmakers (the Japanese director is Kunihiko Yuyama; the dubbed American adaptation is directed by Michael Haigney) want it both ways — show aggression as exciting, then mention it's not the way to go.

The animation is colorful but crudely nondimensional. Some creatures, however, have amusing shapes combining various animal features. One tiny pokemon capable of weeping sudden geysers is adorable. Yet the movie doesn't give any discernible personality to its characters aside from meanie Mewtwo, perky Pikachu and able Ash.

All we can do is hope the pokemon craze will burn itself

out before the title "Pokemon: The First Movie" becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is G — general audiences.

Pare is on the staff of the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting.

## Family Events

☉ **SAT. NOV. 20 — Films:** "Molly's Pilgrim," "New Friends," and "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," for pre-schoolers and older; adults must accompany children under age 5; Sully Branch Library, 939 Bay St., Rochester; 3-4 p.m.; 716/288-5615.

☉ **TUES. NOV. 23 — Meeting:** La Leche League, support group for women interested in breastfeeding; free; Church of Latter Day Saints storefront, 985 Bay St., Rochester; 10 a.m.; 716/235-7044.

☉ **WED. NOV. 24 — 19th Century Festival:** features stories, games and music from the past, presented by Genesee Country Museum; FireSide Lounge, Seymour Union, State University of New York at Brockport, Brockport; free; 7-8 p.m.

☉ **TUES. NOV. 30 — Folk-music performances:** musicians from Golden Link Folk Singing Society will draw names from a hat to create "groups" which will then perform; smoke-free, family-friendly show; Fellowship Hall, 12 Corners Presbyterian Church, 1200 S. Winton Road, Brighton; \$3; handicapped-accessible; 716/234-5044.

☉ **SAT. DEC. 4 — Play:** "Charlotte's Web," for children 4 and older; Nazareth College Arts Center, 4245 East Ave., Rochester; 2 p.m.; \$8 per person; 716/389-2170.

☉ **WED. DEC. 8 — Clown Cabaret:** Mime, magic, comedy and balloons; FireSide Lounge, Seymour Union, State University of New York at Brockport, Brockport; free; 7-8 p.m.

☉ **THRU JAN. 9 — Hands-on**

**exhibit:** Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood; Strong Museum, One Manhattan Square, Rochester; 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; 716/263-2700.

☉ **ONGOING — Nature Displays & Classes:** for children and adults; Mendon Ponds Nature Center, Ponds Road and Clover Street, Honeoye Falls; center is open Thursday through Sunday from 12-4 p.m., trails are open 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily; free admission; 716/334-3780.

☉ **ONGOING — Springdale Farms:** 200-acre farm with animals, historic farm buildings, homestead and walking trails; 696 Golby St., Spencerport; open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and Sundays, 12-4 p.m., except for Easter; free (fee for events); 716/352-5320.

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