

Teens say movie is worth discomfort

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

IRONDEQUOIT — A bloody depiction of Jesus being repeatedly whipped didn't exactly make for a fun afternoon at the movies, Abe Maher and Patrick Leavy admitted.

"It was sick — I almost vomited. It was kind of disgusting," said Abe, 15.

"I stopped eating my cotton candy at that scene," added Patrick, who turns 14 later this month. "You got to thinking, how could people do that to another person?"

Even so, Abe and Patrick said they were glad to be among the youth-group members from their parish, St. Thomas the Apostle, who viewed "The Passion of the Christ" together on Feb. 28. Others from the group told the *Courier* that they, too, found value in the controversial movie despite its high level of violence.

Lynn Fraysier, 15, stated that it's important for Christians to be reminded of the sacrifices Jesus made. "Some people forget, because it happened such a long time ago, how much torture Jesus went through and how cruel the Roman soldiers were," she observed.

A group of 13 St. Thomas the Apostle teens and two adults saw "The Passion," according to Craig Rideout, parish youth minister. Rideout said he heard sobbing during the movie, but that nobody — either in his group or the rest of the theater — seemed to leave the 1:30 p.m. showing at Loew's Webster early because



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

St. Thomas the Apostle youth-group members Patrick Donohue (left) and Sara Hofferbert (right) wait with youth minister Craig Rideout outside Loew's Theatre in Webster Feb. 28 prior to viewing "The Passion of the Christ."



they were too upset by what they saw.

"They were quiet. I was struck by how it was dead silent through all of it," Rideout said.

"Nobody could say anything," Abe agreed.

"And that's saying a lot for me," quipped Brigid Leavy, 16. Brigid said she cried at the portrayal of the Virgin Mary's anguish as she

watched her son crucified, as well as when Jesus' cross was turned upside down after he had just been nailed to it.

Abe, Patrick, Lynn and Brigid agreed that Mel Gibson's movie, for the most part, represented an accurate interpretation of Gospel accounts of Christ's passion.

"You actually felt like you were there," Brigid said, saying she found the movie to be more spiritu-

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al than repulsive. "I thought I was going to be really freaked out, but it was awesome." Brigid added that she was so captivated that when the film ended, "I couldn't get up. I could not move, could not take my eyes off the screen."

Prior to the nationwide release of "The Passion" Feb. 25, widespread concern has been voiced in the media over whether teens — not to mention adults — would be adversely affected by the film's graphic nature. But Lynn, for one, said that "any teenager would be able to see it."

Rideout agreed that the R-rated movie was suitable fare for most teens — but that's about where he would draw the line, saying that young viewers should be old enough to comprehend why Christ would willingly endure such intense suffering. Rideout also said that most of the people at the Feb. 28 showing were much older than members of St. Thomas the Apostle's youth group.

Brigid said she plans to see "The Passion" again, but Abe doubts that he will. "It's not a movie you can go see every month," he said.

At the very least, Brigid said she hopes that everyone will consider a single viewing of "The Passion."

"It doesn't matter who you are. Your faith will definitely be stronger after this movie," she said.

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1. Peter, 2. Acts (of the Apostles), 3. Sabbath, 4. Samaritan, 5. Obadiah, 6. Vatican, 7. Esau, 8. Revelation