

ules

— The reviews reviewed Film & .S. Con-shops.

BOOKS 2:
WIDON'
"Agent his time or spy English musical thwart former (Allen), en top-chnolo-world. ce and The A-II— ts. The ation of PG — ested.

NE OF ID'

n intro- (y) who his for- (Vinslet) n after ecently proce- midway that he nds up us rec- onship. unters, ne drug rough age, as USCCB adults. R —

hriller rofiler in by o help grisly d who volved (awke). ce and ges, a partial h and JSCCB limited whose many ublishing. R —

Celluloid heroes can bolster faith

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

This Lent, millions of people were inspired to reflect on their faith through the film "The Passion of the Christ." Eileen Pollock, however, sees lessons about faith in many movies, even ones that don't draw on the Bible for inspiration.

Pollock began teaching about faith and film in 2000 when she was on the faculty at Rochester's Nazareth Academy. She has since created a program of various talks, called "Ministering with Movies," that she has presented at various parishes, college campuses and youth conventions in the dioceses of Rochester and Buffalo. She maintains a Web site about her program at ministeringwithmovies.com. Pollock left Nazareth last year to take a position as a Catholic campus minister at Syracuse University.

Pollock's talks have covered such topics as Scripture in film; movies as spiritual journeys; and how various theological virtues appear on screen. She believes all ministers should study how movies are made because everyone is influenced by them. She added that movies are valuable catechetical tool.

"You can talk and do all of these activities, but you show (students) movies and they get it, they just get it," she said of faith themes.

For example, she said, she once gave a presentation on "Theology in Film" to a parish youth group that included some teenagers who rarely spoke up at meetings, according to their youth minister. However, after her presentation, the usually reserved teenagers "didn't shut up," she said. That illustrates just how powerful movies are, she said.

"You have no idea who you're reaching and why," she added.

Pollock said that the universal church has encouraged filmmakers to use movies as a means to evangelize. The Vatican II "Decree on the Means of Social Communication" states that if media, including film, "are properly used they can be of considerable benefit to mankind." She added that the U.S. bishops provide movie reviews, along with their own ratings system, at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Web site at www.usccb.org.

At the top of the list of current reviews found at the bishops' site is "The Passion." Pollock noted she was asked to review the film, and presented a talk on it recently at her uni-

versity. A convert from Judaism, Pollock said she did not find "The Passion" to be anti-Semitic, as some critics contended, but she did have mixed reactions to viewing it. On the one hand, she found the movie to be excessively violent, and the level of torture it portrayed Jesus enduring stretched the film's credibility. On the other hand, the movie inspired in her a newfound reverence for the Eucharist, she said.

"Roman Catholics are people who profess the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist," she said. "The scenes (in 'The Passion') superimposing Christ on the cross and the Last Supper when, we believe, he instituted the Eucharist, powerfully reinforce this teaching."

As someone who teaches about faith and film, Pollock said she was delighted by the numerous conversations "The Passion" has inspired among people. However, Pollock said, she prefers movies "that hint at spiritual themes by telling a secular story," rather than lay it all out as "The Passion" does. Catholics can draw valuable lessons about God and life from any number of films, including "The Wizard of Oz," "The Lord of the Rings," "Whale Rider" and "The Lion King," Pollock said. For example, she said, "The Wizard of Oz" shows its main character, Dorothy, finding answers inside of her.

"It's proof that the spiritual journey is inward and that we don't even have to leave our kitchen table or farm house, so to speak," Pollock said.

She added that such movies as "The Lion King" and "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy of films portray "Christ figures," protagonists who must embark on quests that test their spiritual mettle and lead to their eventual transformation into new beings who share their "treasures" with others. Such treasures may mean the hero or heroine has learned how to use his or her gifts for the wider community, she said. A main character who transforms through a quest into someone serving others is a Christian theme, she said.

"To have a God that is a trinity means that God is relationships," she said. "We say God works through relationships."

Not all films have spiritual merit, Pollock said, and many may be even harmful to one's soul. However, she urged Catholics to remain open to finding spiritual themes in whatever



New Line Cinema/CNS

Faith lessons can be gleaned from such movies as "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy. A scene from the finale, "The Return of the King," is shown above.

movies they see.

"When you open yourself up, you have to be a discerning person," she said.

One way to learn discernment is to learn how films are made, she said, urging Catholics to read a textbook, or two on the making of movies. One

of the chief languages of filmmakers is symbolism, she said.

"Be aware of what's happening to you," she said of watching films. "Symbols always affect you positively or negatively. They're working on your spirit, so the more you know the better off you'll be."

The Catholic Book of Bible Stories



Catholic Book of Bible Stories

25% OFF

- Retells 50 familiar Bible stories
- Highlights key messages
- Personalizes and ties the stories into the Catholic faith
- Ends each story with a Trinity prayer
- Includes crafts and activities to help children remember themes

Coupon must be presented at time of purchase. Expires May 31, 2004.

Alpha & Omega bookstore and More

Brighton

Southview Commons
125 White Spruce Blvd
(585) 272-8080

Greece

Stone Ridge Plaza
1520 West Ridge Road
(585) 697-7693

Penfield

Panorama Plaza
1601 Pentfield Rd
(585) 381-1250

Open Monday through Saturday
10 a.m. to 9 p.m.
www.alphaandomegabookstore.com

Zonderkidz

ZONDERVAN