Tom Hardy and Charlize Theron star in "Mad Max: Fury Road."

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The fantasy of 'Mad Max: Fury Road' and the prophecy of 'Tomorrowland'

By ROSE PACATTE

This summer's "Tomorrowland," from Disney and director Brad Bird, and "Mad Max: Fury Road," a "reboot" of the original Mad Max trilogy from the 1970s and '80s from Australian director George Miller, go together better than you might think at first glance. Seeing them in tandem makes all the difference.

"Mad Max: Fury Road" is the typical post-apocalyptic dystopian flick with themes of hope and redemption and regeneration. The lead characters are courageous, violent fighters, and hope is a mirage.

In "Tomorrowland," the apocalypse is pending. There is still time to change, to do something. The main characters have optimistic energy, vision and willpower. The only violence I recall is a bunch of human-looking robots are destroyed in a shop fight.

"Tomorrowland" stops the forward — and backward — thrust of the "Mad Max" gaggle of mashed-up, reconstituted vehicles dead in their desert tracks and seems to ask, in a total un-Disney way, "Aren't you tired of all these mayhem and scorched earth survivalist movies? Do you really think these cataclysmic events are inevitable? What about doing something to prevent these events in the first place? How and who would do it? The politicians? Corporations? Think again."

"Mad Max: Fury Road" features Charlize Theron as Imperator Furiosa (Latin for "furious commander"), a woman seeking redemption, though from what we will have to wait for the sequel to learn. She seems to be following the leader of a huge group of nuclear holocaust survivalists, Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne), but in their trek across a barren landscape, she strikes her own course toward the Green Place where she was born.

Hidden inside Furiosa's tanker are several women, kind of like "sister wives" to the scarred leader, Joe. They are breeders for his "family."

A true despot, Joe realizes something is amiss and the caravan goes after her. He controls everything at his headquarters, The Citadel, especially water, to keep the sick, poor, and damaged survivors at bay.

—©Disney/Kimberley French

Britt Robertson and George Clooney star in "Tomorrowland."

Joe's survivalists have captured Max Rockatansky (Tom Hardy) as a source of blood for Nux (Nicholas Hoult). Max and Nux are bound so he can keep the supply of blood going and they take off in pursuit of Furiosa's rig, too. To make a long story shorter, both Max and Nux join the women, with Joe and his minions in hot pursuit.

After making it through a narrow canyon passage, they encounter a group of older women, a remnant, protecting the desert of what used to be the Green Place. They decide to return together to Joe's Citadel because it has water. The oldest woman carries a bag with seeds in it; one has taken root and a flash of green leaves is pushing through. Off the survivors go, promising a sequel as the credits start to roll.

Nothing about this story is tame. It is filled with relentless, nonstop action, violence with a hint of humor. The mutant blind rock singer/flame thrower Doof Warrior (iOTA), who is strapped to one of Joe's lead vehicles with bungee cords, looks like a leftover member of Mötley Crüe. It is so incongruous that all you can do is laugh. There is mention of hope and redemption and life-giving water here and there.

A priest friend wrote on Facebook that "Mad Max: Fury Road" is "socially corrosive" from beginning to end. Actually, I think this is what the movie is about: The consequences of uncaring, socially corrosive behavior will lead to worldwide disaster.

The question is: What do you do about it? How do you restore the environment, order and life itself? It will take a spectacular cinematic dystopian revolution — at least this is where "Mad Max" leaves us as a sequel (or sequels) is surely coming — but so what?

We've seen it all before just packaged differently. Children are made to kill children in "The Hunger Games"; the "Divergent" franchise, to me, is basically the same story. We can perhaps look to "The Giver" and "Fahrenheit 451" as the source of the post-apocalyptic genre in fiction and movies like "The Omega Man" in 1971.

Hollywood keeps pumping out these movies, many based on popular novels, for new generations to flock to theaters to see, only to leave and wait for the next one. (Television's fascination with the vampire subgenre tells the same story: The end is near and life after is going to be hell.) Yes, there are those spiritual and religious themes that we console ourselves with. But then what?

Although "Tomorrowland" was largely panned by critics, ideologically I found it to be a breath of fresh air amid the dystopian dust created by peat-and-repeat movies. Both films are fantastical imaginings of future cataclysms to come, one dark and the other much lighter, but "Tomorrowland" risks being different from all the other films in the genre because it appoints, practically anoints, those who can change the course of history.

Go backward to 1964. Young Frank Walker (Thomas Robinson) makes his way through the crowds at the New York World's Fair to the inventor's pavilion. He is carrying his invention, a jetpack made from a vacuum cleaner, to enter a contest. Will his invention help make the world a better place?

The man in charge, Nix (Hugh Laurie), dismisses it because it is just for fun with no real purpose, though he knows Frank is a very smart kid. Instead, he introduces Frank to Athena (Raffey Cassidy) who seems to be Nix's daughter (a Disney version of Nux in "Mad Max"?). Frank is smitten and Athena takes him on a tour of a place that exists in another dimension: Tomorrowland (drawn from Disney theme park's Tomorrowland, of course).

Fast forward into the future, and we meet Casey Newton (played by Britt Robertson; note the connection to the name Newton) who is very bright and dismayed at the bad news all around her. The Earth is a scary place. It is decaying and the government is shutting down NASA, where her father, Eddie (Tim McGraw), is an engineer. Britt seeks out Frank (George Clooney), now a recluse, and when Athena appears again, they fight off some robots and try to save both Tomorrowland and the Earth.

"Tomorrowland" makes a strong statement about setting aside politics and big profit corporations because of their failure to care for the Earth, indeed their record of over-consuming and destroying resources. The movie wants to encourage us to use our imaginations to solve the world's problems — to let loose the creative energy of artists and scientists to change the inevitable doom that pop culture continually regurgitates for us.

The evening news, local or national, report on environmental stories often, if we are paying attention enough to notice and ask questions. Or if we can connect the dots from art and current events that Pope Francis lays out for us in his encyclical "*Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home," perhaps we can join the dreamers, artists, scientists and people of goodwill to make the changes needed to nurture and preserve the Earth for everyone's benefit, not just the rich and powerful.

So why are we compelled to watch disaster as entertainment but as some do, refuse to acknowledge the human element to climate change and the consequences of scorched earth human activity unfolding in front of us? "Mad Max: Fury Road" and films like it, are actually prophetic. "Tomorrowland" takes the bold step of telling us directly what we can do, because as loud and explosive as these other films are, we don't seem able to see, hear or understand. Maybe this is why Hollywood keeps making them.

Regardless, are we not entertained, as Maximus (Russell Crowe) yells to the crowd in Ridley Scott's 2000 "Gladiator"? As far as the American film industry and the world audience go, isn't this all that really matters? For mindful viewers and creative people of goodwill, I hope not.

[Sr. Rose Pacatte, a member of the Daughters of St. Paul, is director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies in Los Angeles.]

A normal, heroic girl

Documentary is an inspiring, intimate look at Malala's life and passion for education

By ROSE PACATTE

There is a legend in Pakistan that goes something like this. During the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80), a young woman named Malala (or Malalai) was tending to the injured when the Afghan army started to retreat. She called out to her husband to stand firm and, taking off her veil, she used it as a flag to rally the troops. They turned back and defeated the British that day, but the heroic Malala was killed.

"He Named Me Malala" is Oscar-winning producer/director Davis Guggenheim's documentary film about Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani schoolgirl who survived an assassination attempt by the Taliban on Oct. 9, 2012. Her father, Ziauddin, named his daughter Malala, not because it was a name that could bring sorrow, as most people in their town believed, but because it meant courage.

The film opens with a beautifully animated sequence, narrated by Malala, about her namesake. The blending of her voice with the deeply hued images is sheer cinematic poetry.

Seldom does a child follow in the footsteps so closely of the one for whom she is named. It all began in her family and with her father's dedication to education, especially for girls. Although war was ongoing by U.S. forces

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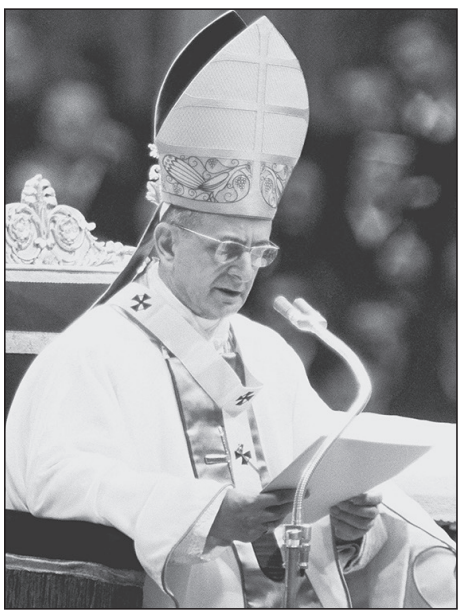
—Gina Nemirofsky

Malala Yousafzai in the documentary "He Named Me Malala"

How the church turned toward religious freedom

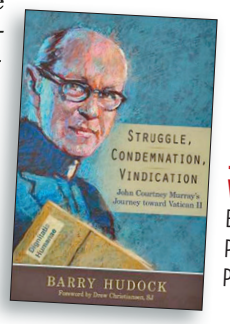


—AP Photo

Pope Paul VI announces promulgation of the Second Vatican Council's last four decrees, including *Dignitatis Humanae*, at the Vatican, Dec. 7, 1965.

Reviewed by MARIAN RONAN

After four Fortnights for Freedom and multiple Catholic lawsuits over the contraceptive mandate of the Affordable Care Act, an observer might well conclude that religious freedom is a fundamental tenet of the Catholic faith. In *Struggle, Condemnation, Vindication*, Barry Hudock sets readers straight about how recently the Catholic church came to accept religious freedom at all and the fierce battles that preceded such acceptance.



STRUGGLE, CONDEMNATION, VINDICATION: JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY'S JOURNEY TOWARD VATICAN II
By Barry Hudock
Published by Liturgical Press, $19.95

Hudock weaves several plotlines into his narrative of the months and years leading up to the passage of *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Declaration on Religious Freedom at the Second Vatican Council. The first plotline is the story of John Courtney Murray, the U.S. Jesuit whose 17-year effort to bring about the development of Catholic teaching on religious freedom culminated in the passage of *Dignitatis Humanae* at the council's final session in 1965.

Murray, ordained in 1933, was considered a brilliant theologian; he earned a doctorate in sacred theology at the Gregorian in Rome in 1937 and became editor-in-chief of the Jesuit journal *Theological Studies* at the age of 37. In 1945, he still held the traditional Catholic position on church/state relations and the concomitant condemnation of religious freedom for everyone except Catholics.

In 1948, however, Murray began to argue that although no law should support heresy, neither is the state, whether Catholic or otherwise, required to suppress it. The earlier Catholic teaching, which claimed that "heresy has no rights," was time-conditioned, shaped especially by the French Revolution. Church teaching on religious freedom needed to be developed within the 20th-century historical context.

Over the next few years, even as Murray's thinking on the question evolved, a number of powerful church authorities fought it.

By 1954, Murray's superiors had forbidden him to publish anything further on religious freedom. This silencing continued until 1963, when Murray finally became a peritus, or expert, at Vatican II, having been passed over at the first session.

Murray then played a pivotal role in drafting the third and fourth versions of *Dignitatis Humanae*, though his historical-legal approach was modified somewhat in the final version, which had been formulated while Murray was ill.

Hudock shows that *Dignitatis Humanae* incited more controversy and politicking than any other Vatican II document. That Murray sustained two heart attacks and a collapsed

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MALALA: RETURNING GOOD FOR EVIL

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against the Taliban in Afghanistan in the 2000s, the Taliban were on the rise in northwest Pakistan. In Swat, a town about 100 miles from the capital of Islamabad, the Taliban first seemed concerned for the people. But under their leader, the young Mullah Fazlullah, the activities of women were becoming more limited, and education for girls slowly shut down.

The BBC wanted to get the inside story but no one would talk. Together with her father, 12-year-old Malala decided to keep an anonymous blog for the BBC about her experiences at school. But because of her father's known public activism and involvement with education and opening schools for girls, the Taliban eventually figured out that Malala was the blogger and she became a target.

"He Named Me Malala" is a gentle film that moves back and forth between Malala and her family today and those dark days just three years ago when she and two of her classmates were shot in their school bus on their way home.

Malala was shot in the head, and after surgery in Pakistan, she was airlifted to England, where doctors worked tirelessly to save her life. When she came out of the coma, the first person she asked for was her father. She was worried, distraught that he might blame himself for what happened. It was her decision to keep that blog and she owned it.

Malala is a normal teen but fierce when it comes to her passion: education for girls. As most people know, she was the co-winner of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize for her continuing efforts to promote education around the world, just as she is a normal girl in Birmingham, England, struggling to get good marks in school. The film is gracious and generous and allows Malala to speak, explaining the difference between Islam and the extremists who use it for political power.

It was interesting to see some comments by what looked like well-educated Pakistani citizens who believe that the assassination attempt on Malala's life was some kind of publicity stunt. Really? Perhaps the Taliban's propaganda is having an effect.

It is even more interesting to see how she takes on Goodluck Jonathan, then president of Nigeria, when she visited him to talk about the schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram.

Malala Yousafzai faces the press in "He Named Me Malala."

—Gina Nemirofsky

The film is barely 90 minutes long, but I could have watched more. "He Named Me Malala" is a film almost anyone can and should see despite its rather ridiculous PG-13 rating. The only thing that could be mildly distressing for parents is the photo of the bloodstained bus; kids see so much more than this on television and video games. At least here, there are consequences, and the context provides an inspiring and moving story that audiences can talk about.

As for Malala, she holds no anger about what happened to her — none at all.

"He Named Me Malala" is an intimate look at this teenager's life. It is a celebration of girls, women, education, teachers, family, health care, advocacy, human rights, perseverance, returning good for evil, and the generosity of humanity in the face of the most cowardly violence. And, dare I say it, how lucky we are, as Malala reminds us, that we get to go to school.

[Sr. Rose Pacatte, a member of the Daughters of St. Paul, is the director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies in Los Angeles. "He Named Me Malala," a film from Fox Searchlight Pictures, opens in theaters Oct. 2.]

FREEDOM: MURRAY'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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lung during the council and died 20 months later suggests the degree of stress the conflict may have generated.

The second plotline traces the evolution of Catholic teaching on religious freedom from the French Revolution to the 1965 passage of *Dignitatis Humanae* — though even using the words "religious freedom" is less than accurate. Before *Dignitatis Humanae*, the church simply did not acknowledge a right to religious freedom, admitting only that "tolerance" toward non-Catholic religions was sometimes unavoidable.

This was based in something called the "thesis/hypothesis" approach, in which the legal establishment of the Catholic faith is the ideal (the thesis). Nevertheless, where circumstances make this impossible, for example, when Catholics are in the minority, the non-ideal (the "hypothesis") applies.

Murray rebutted the "thesis/hypothesis" argument by situating it within its historical context, the attack on the church by the post-revolutionary French secular state. He then located it along a timeline of other approaches to the subject, including the recognition of both church and state by the fifth-century Pope Gelasius, and the modern Anglo-Saxon model under which the U.S. church was thriving. A further developed teaching on church/state relations and religious freedom in the context of the 20th century was the logical result.

In the 50 years since its final session, Vatican II has been categorized in a number of ways: as a continuation of Vatican I; as a rupture in that trajectory; as an event; and as the manifestation of a new pastorally significant rhetorical style.

Although Hudock quotes one peritus to the effect that the debate over *Dignitatis Humanae* was the most violent of the entire council, Hudock basically gives the conflict over religious freedom a happy ending, with Murray and Paul VI concelebrating the Eucharist before the final vote and making champagne toasts afterward.

People arrive at St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Dec. 7, 1965, to attend the public session of the Second Vatican Council.

—AP

Another Murray scholar, Jesuit Fr. J. Leon Hooper, however, documents Murray's profound dissatisfaction with the final version of *Dignitatis Humanae*. He also argues that Murray's understanding of religious freedom went well beyond what council historians admit.

In the end, according to Hooper, Murray's religious freedom gave the people the right to be locked together in moral and religious conversation both within and beyond the boundaries of the church. This is so because God reveals Godself even from beyond the boundaries of the tradition.

All of this leads to the current uproar over religious freedom spearheaded by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and its conservative allies.

It's impossible to be certain what Murray would have thought about the bishops' use of "religious freedom" to undercut the contraceptive mandate of the Affordable Care Act even in the face of a significant federal exemption for religious nonprofits. We do learn in *Struggle, Condemnation, Vindication*, however, that in 1964, Murray urged Boston Cardinal Richard Cushing not to oppose a bill pending in the Massachusetts legislature that lifted the ban on the sale of birth control and the provision of medical information about it. Murray argued that contraception is a matter of private morality. Cushing did not oppose the bill.

The last chapter of *Struggle, Condemnation, Vindication* recapitulates the conflict over religious freedom between Murray and his opponents from the 1940s through the final session of Vatican II. While the opponents claimed that Murray's work marked a "very definite and radical departure from what has hitherto been regarded as Catholic doctrine," Murray insisted he wasn't questioning the doctrine, but the historically conditioned expression of it.

Based on these differences, Hudock concludes that "understanding the truth about God and God's revelation to humanity is sometimes a struggle," even for "those whose job it is to discern it."

Somebody should send a copy of this book to each of the U.S. bishops.

[Marian Ronan is research professor of Catholic studies at New York Theological Seminary in New York City. She blogs at **marianronan.wordpress.com**.]

—Entertainment One
From left: Michael Keaton, Rachel McAdams, Mark Ruffalo and Liev Schreiber star in "Spotlight."

The Watergate of the Catholic church

'Spotlight' brings Boston Globe *investigation to film, reminding us to keep vigil on ourselves, to be the Christians we say we are*

By ROSE PACATTE

Director Thomas McCarthy's new film, "Spotlight," plays like the Watergate of the Catholic church. Focusing on *The Boston Globe* investigative news team that, through a series of articles in 2002, exposed the cover-up of clergy pedophiles by Cardinal Bernard Law (and ultimately many other prelates and dioceses), it even includes Ben Bradlee Jr. (John Slattery), then deputy managing editor of the paper. (His father, Ben Sr., was the publisher of *The Washington Post* when the paper's investigation of President Richard Nixon and his staff revealed their part in the Watergate break-in and subsequent cover-up.)

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Primordial faith embraces coexistence in Indonesia

ESSAY

By DAVID PINAULT

I make a living teaching courses on Islam. I also happen to be a Catholic. No surprise, then, that I'm interested in Muslim-Christian relations and the status of non-Muslim minority populations in Islamic societies.

Which makes Indonesia my favorite place for fieldwork. Home to the world's largest Muslim population, it legally acknowledges the practice of five faiths: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity (Protestantism and Catholicism are each individually recognized). Your KTP (*Kartu Tanda Penduduk*, or national identity card) indicates which of the five you belong to. Leaving the space blank or requesting an alternative designation — "agnostic," say, or "atheist" — isn't an option.

The majority of Indonesians — over 85 percent — are Muslim, many of them adherents of a tolerant form of Islam that blends Sufi mysticism with the region's Hindu-Buddhist legacy. But lately, traditional Indonesian Islam has come under attack.

Saudi-inspired missionaries, taking their cue from Islamists in the Middle East, call for the "purification" of Indonesia and denounce traditional Muslims as *musyrik* (polytheists, a Quranic term referring to those who ascribe divine partners to Allah). The Jakarta-based Islamic Defenders Front calls for the imposition of Shariah, or Islamic law, nationwide and has staged violent attacks on gays, secularists, prostitutes, evangelical Christians, and members of "deviant" Islamic sects.

Even the Islamic State group has found a foothold. According to statements issued by Indonesia's National Counterterrorism Agency and Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, as of this year, more than 600 Indonesian militants are now fighting for the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq — enough of them, according to *The Jakarta Post*, so that the Islamic State group has formed a separate *katibah*, or battalion, of Malay- and Indonesian-speaking militants.

Additionally, Indonesian police investigators in central Sulawesi recently reported that Islamic State recruits have been undergoing training in the jungles of that island's Poso Pesisir mountain range.

Disturbing news. Fortunately, the old forms of worship still survive, and a good place to find them is Alas Purwo, one of the most secluded locales on the island of Java. Comprising savannah grasslands, mangrove swamps, oceanfront beach, and thickly

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Brian d'Arcy James: "My identity has been shaped and formed by my evolution as a Catholic. It's something I'm proud of."

—Jordan Matter

Role was education for Catholic actor

By RETTA BLANEY

NEW YORK · Like many people, actor Brian d'Arcy James was aware of news coverage of sexual abuse by clergy in the Boston archdiocese 15 years ago, but he didn't follow it closely. He had no way of knowing those events would one day be part of his life.

"It was on my radar," he said. "I received information wholesale and processed it as best could."

It wasn't until he read the script for "Spotlight," the new film based on *The Boston Globe*'s four-member investigative team that pursued and broke the story, that he understood its magnitude. "For me, it was an education in terms of the size and scope, and the ramifications of the reporting," he said.

He saw the coverage as "a beacon of sorts" coming as it did from a reputable news source. "People who perhaps had not been heard or believed prior to that could say, 'This is my story.' "

James, 47, discussed the film in his dressing room at Broadway's St. James Theatre, where he is starring in the zany hit musical "Something Rotten!" A practicing Catholic, James said portraying Matt Carroll, one of the *Globe* reporters, helped him see the cover-up as "an institutional problem with significant and widespread consequences," but said he still finds spiritual comfort in Catholicism.

"It's not something to make me leave the church," he said. "I lost a lot of faith in the institution. I'm still baffled by it, but it didn't stop me all together. I'd be lying if I said it didn't slow me down.

"My impulse is still to attend church and experience the ritual of the Mass."

The movie's goal is not to make the church look bad, James said. "It's the responsibility of anyone in power to do the right thing. When they don't, they have to be held accountable."

It's happenstance, he said, that the film is being released on the heels of Pope Francis' American tour, which was largely a positive boost for the church's image because of the pope's popularity.

"It's a great thing because the pope made comments about sexual abuse in the Catholic church," James said. "He said, 'God weeps.' He said he will hold people accountable and I hope he does. I wish he had spent more time on that subject matter, but he started a conversation. That creates a space where dialogue can occur. It all comes back to accountability.

"Catholics can see this film without defensiveness."

Raised Catholic in Saginaw, Mich., James attended St. Stephen School through high school. "The teachers taught us to value education in the way they taught us to think," he said. "It was a great benefit. My education taught me to toil the soil of a subject."

He also was influenced by how his parents drew "a great deal of strength and solace" from their Catholic faith.

"It allowed them to live lives fulfilling for them," James said. "It taught them and me to live a life of thoughtfulness, generosity and respect for others, the Golden Rule.

"My identity has been shaped and formed by my evolution as a Catholic. It's something I'm proud of."

He now attends Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Sherman, Conn., with his wife, actress Jennifer Prescott, and their 13-year-old daughter, Grace. Lately, though, he's "been porous in my attendance."

That is understandable, considering the rigors of performing eight shows a week in a Broadway musical, portraying Nick Bottom, a struggling Renaissance playwright who consults a soothsayer who tells him that hit plays in the future will involve singing and dancing as well as acting — all in the same show! — so Bottom sets out to create the world's first musical. James is onstage for 100 of the show's 125 minutes.

His efforts earned him a best actor Tony Award nomination. The show received 10 nominations, including the one for best new musical.

Besides being a regular on New York stages, James has appeared in several TV shows, such as "Smash," as well as many films, including the upcoming "Sisters" with Tina Fey and Amy Poehler. In mid-December, he will be featured in the New York Pops holiday concerts at Carnegie Hall.

While James followed his heart into the theater, with his background he could easily have moved into politics. His maternal grandfather was governor of Michigan and his father, a lawyer, served on the city council and was involved with Republican fundraising. James considered following in the family trade "for a few seconds" before heading to Northwestern University to major in theater.

In preparing for his role in "Spotlight," James read *Globe* coverage and spent time with Carroll to understand who he was and how he worked. Carroll's work and research were James' road map into the role. Although he didn't meet with any of the church abuse victims, people who had suffered abuse shared stories because of his role in the film.

"It allowed people to speak, to say, 'Let me tell you my story.' The movie has the potential to do that."

It's also a "good, old-fashioned movie," he said.

"People love a David and Goliath story, especially when it comes to justice. It's a very compelling thing to watch. Add to that the fact that it's true, and it's stunning."

[Retta Blaney is author of *Working on the Inside: The Spiritual Life Through the Eyes of Actors*.]

'SPOTLIGHT': SILENT POWER

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The fact-based film is an engrossing, relevant, finely underplayed, and ultimately heartbreaking crime mystery.

The film opens with the Fr. John Geoghan case making news in 1999. The Spotlight team, Walter "Robby" Robinson (Michael Keaton), Michael Rezendes (Mark Ruffalo), Sacha Pfeiffer (Rachel McAdams), Matt Carroll (Brian d'Arcy James), and Bradlee are tossing around the idea of doing more coverage when the new publisher, Marty Baron (Liev Schreiber), arrives. He thinks Spotlight, the oldest investigative team in U.S. journalism history, should look more closely at the clergy sex abuse scandal, going back to the Fr. James Porter case in the early '90s.

The team contacts Phil Saviano (Neil Huff) of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. He arrives with a box of information that he had given the *Globe* five years previously but they had ignored. He also provides a list of 10 people abused by priests.

This forms the basis from which a monumental story emerges about almost 80 priests in the Boston archdiocese who are accused of molesting children.

One of the team's sources is attorney Mitchell Garabedian (Stanley Tucci) who reluctantly asks one of dozens of clergy abuse victims he is defending in lawsuits against the Boston archdiocese to speak with Rezendes.

The victim explains that his abuser went after him because his family was poor and honored priests more than anyone else. How could you say anything against a priest? The victim allows his name to be used and the case builds.

When Baron makes a courtesy call to Law (Len Cariou), the cardinal says that the archdiocese and the *Globe* can work well together, but Baron turns him down. Before he leaves, Law gives Baron a gift: a copy of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

As the months wear on, a pattern of complicity emerges. The silent power of the Catholic church is felt everywhere. Parents and victims don't speak out because it is suggested to them that it will hurt the church; a Catholic judge seals public records; the lead prosecutor, Eric MacLeish (Billy Crudup), reveals that abuse cases that have come to him are settled quietly and not prosecuted.

The Spotlight team elicits almost unbelievable interviews with abusers and others who go on the record. But they must have their information confirmed, especially the list of 80 priest abusers. They realize more and more that Law knew about the pedophiles and sent some for treatment and transferred others, leading to more abuse.

Ready to go to press in late 2001 with their explosive story, Baron slows them down, urging the team to go after the institution and its systematic policies and practices, and not just stopping with Law. This frustrates the team, and Rezendes screams out his horror that any delay could mean the abuse of even more children and that this cannot be allowed to happen.

By Epiphany Sunday in 2002, the first in a series of articles is published, with the archdiocese and Law declining to comment.

"Spotlight" is a film that needs to be taken seriously. Although policies are now in place, from the U.S. bishops' conference to the Vatican, they have been slow in coming and implementing. At one point in the film, a layman friend of Law asks one of the *Globe* team about the journalistic ethics of going public with such a story and the reporter answers: What about the ethics of not doing so?

There can be no doubt that *The Boston Globe* did a great deal of good by exposing Law's cover-up of what he knew, when he knew it, and what he failed to do: protect the people of God in his care. The Boston story, however, was the tip of the iceberg, as closing credits of the film show. This is the bigger story that Baron was after.

Some may judge Ruffalo's monologue reaction to the slowdown imposed by Baron as melodramatic, but it made me cry. It cut right through the excuses and the cover-up, and revealed the pain and violence of the abuse, as if he himself were a victim, too.

Schreiber, as the laconic, tough, incisive Baron, is perfect. All the performances are spot-on and the ensemble cast deserves recognition, as does McCarthy for directing and co-writing with Josh Singer. There is a Catholic "inside" sensibility to the film that I think comes from McCarthy's Catholic background, as well as that of several cast members.

While the story is compelling in itself, there is another dimension that the characters discuss in the film: their own disillusion with the Catholic church that some of them were raised in. Rezendes admits he had stopped going to Mass before this story broke but that he always thought he would go back. But how?

What does this tragic tale say to the people of

From left: Rachel McAdams, Mark Ruffalo, Brian d'Arcy James, Michael Keaton and John Slattery in "Spotlight"

—Entertainment One

God? Do we walk away in the face of such a great betrayal and scandal? I think most people have stayed and are working to be part of the solution, realizing that everyone in the church, especially those in the service of authority, have feet of clay.

But I know many who cannot bring themselves to come back, or might come to Mass but that's about all. The powerful subculture that permitted Law and other prelates to move abusive priests around and hide their knowledge of what those priests were doing is unfathomable to those who do not belong to it.

"Spotlight" shines a strong reflection back on the *Globe* team's failure to pay attention to the growing scandal when they had the chance, sources and opportunity. They, too, failed along the way, and they admit it.

I thought it was a little strange that Michael Paulsen, the *Globe* religion reporter who wrote articles about the scandal, too, did not appear in the film, though the team mentions him. I was living in Boston during this time and his articles are the ones I remember. He shared the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service with the Spotlight team. (It could be that another production is in the works featuring his perspective in the saga.)

I am writing this review at the Venice Film Festival in Italy, where I am serving a part of the SIGNIS Catholic jury. The film is not screening in competition, but I went to the first press screening and the applause was extensive. When the follow-up paragraphs rolled at the end of the film saying that Law resigned in December 2002 and was reassigned to be rector of St. Mary Major in Rome, the audience, made up largely of the Italian press, roared with laughter, because that's what the church does — move problematic people around and promote them.

At the premiere screening in Venice, another jury member told me that the applause went on and on and included a standing ovation — the first for any film shown at the festival this year.

Regardless of what anyone says, *The Boston Globe* did the Catholic church a huge favor. "Spotlight" reminds us to keep vigil on ourselves as church, that we will be the Christians we say we are, that we do not choose the institution over God's people, especially children, the poor and the vulnerable. The press and cinema, in this case, are a blessing.

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