

NEWS

Movie a must-see for bishops

ROME — Every bishop and cardinal must watch the film “Spotlight,” so they realize reporting abuse — not silence — will save the church, said the Vatican’s former chief prosecutor of clerical sex abuse cases.

The film underlines the key problem of “omerta” or a code of silence, said Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna of Malta, according to the Italian daily La Repubblica Feb. 17.

“The movie shows how the instinct — that unfortunately was present in the church — to protect a reputation was completely wrong,” he said after a showing of the film in Valletta, Malta.

“All bishops and cardinals must see this film,” he said, “because they must understand that it is reporting that will save the church, not ‘omerta.’”

The archbishop, 56, is the head of a board within the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that deals with appeals filed by clergy accused of abuse. (Catholic News Service)

Bombing kills Caritas volunteer

VATICAN CITY — A young volunteer for Caritas Syria was killed in continued violence there.

Elias Abiad, 22, who had been volunteering for the church agency since 2014, was hit by mortar shells Feb. 13 in Aleppo, reported Fides, news agency of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Bishop Georges Abou Khazen of Aleppo said bombings caused four more deaths and injured more than 15 people the same night Abiad died.

While many people have been fleeing from the armed conflict that has devastated the country the past five years, the Maronite archbishop of Damascus, Samir Nassar, is building new churches in the city as a “gesture of revolt against death and destruction.” (CNS)

Excited pilgrim gets papal scolding

MORELIA, Mexico — Excitement turned potentially dangerous and elicited an angry snap from Pope Francis at a meeting with young people in Morelia Feb. 16.

As the 79-year-old pope made his way to greet a boy in a wheelchair, one of the many pilgrims behind the boy pulled the pope’s arm, causing him to fall over the disabled youth.

Security personnel immediately helped him up as the pilgrim continued to latch onto him. Visibly concerned for the young boy in the wheelchair he leaned against, the pope emphatically scolded the young pilgrim, saying: “Pero que te pasa? No seas egoista! No seas egoista!” (“What is the matter? Don’t be selfish! Don’t be selfish!”)

The scene, which was witnessed by thousands, prompted organizers to plead with pilgrims to show some restraint.

“Please contain yourself,” the announcer said. “Pope Francis wants to greet us, but if we pile up, it will be difficult to do so.” (CNS)

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Movie review | Risen

A life-altering quest

By John Mulderig

Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — In days of yore, Hollywood knew how to make Christian themes pay off at the box office.

Though the result was not always decorous — risqué content in 1932’s “The Sign of the Cross” helped spur the formation of the National Legion of Decency — they were sometimes spectacular.

And so there arose the biblical epic, a genre which gave us such iconic spectacles as the chariot race in 1959’s “Ben-Hur” and such memorable lines as Pharaoh’s imperious order in “The Ten Commandments” (1956): “So let it be written. So let it be done.”

The formula behind such films blended some of Western civilization’s most familiar narratives — scriptural literacy then being a much more widespread asset than it is today — with action sequences and, preferably, a love story. High-caliber special effects, whether they involved slave-powered sea battles or the parting of the Red Sea into towering walls of water, were another purely secular draw.

It’s a recipe few were cooking up in the last third of the 20th century, however. By the 1960s, “Don’t bring me down with your Bible, man” might have been the feared reaction to the serving up of such an old-fashioned cinematic dish.

Some have tried their hand at recombining the ingredients in more recent years. Yet the cultural gulf opened up by the decline of



Joseph Fiennes and Tom Felton star in a scene from the movie “Risen.”

CNS photo/Columbia Pictures

faith has made for a peculiar sort of revisionism. Witness the anti-human environmentalism of Darren Aronofsky’s “Noah” from 2014. Hardly the life-affirming tale of divine mercy most readers have found in those passages of Genesis.

Avoiding alienation from the sacred source material without, on the other hand, declining into a lazy stance of believers-versus-the-world piety can be a tricky business. But the makers of the Resurrection-themed drama “Risen” (Columbia) have pulled it off

to splendid effect.

Wisely, writer-director Kevin Reynolds begins by giving us a hard-bitten, cynical protagonist — a figure as little disposed to believe in miracles as his worldly minded modern counterpart, Charles Ryder, the religion-averse narrator of Evelyn Waugh’s classic 1945 novel “Brideshead Revisited.”

Where Ryder, an artist, is impeded by his pleasure-loving sophistication, Clavius (Joseph Fiennes), the Roman tribune at the heart of “Risen,” is too battle-weary and

blood-soaked to entertain any easy hopes for the world. So the execution of Jesus (Cliff Curtis), which he witnesses almost accidentally, makes little impression on him.

Similarly, when his superior and patron, Pontius Pilate (Peter Firth), orders Clavius, a few days later, to investigate the disappearance of the crucified man’s body, it strikes the jaded officer as just one more task in the endless work of maintaining Roman sovereignty over a religion-crazed populace. As Caiaphas (Stephen Greif) explains,

Jesus’ fanatic followers are spreading wild rumors of his return from the dead, so physical proof is needed to contradict their crazy fable.

Assisted by Lucius (Tom Felton), an ambitious, though untested, junior officer whose major qualification for serving as Clavius’ aide-de-camp lies in the fact that he’s a family friend of Pilate’s, Clavius sets out on what he imagines will be a straightforward hunt for a corpse. Instead, of course, the pursuit turns out to have life-altering consequences for him.

Fine acting, lavish settings and the sense of humor frequently evident in Reynolds’ script all add up to an unusually effective big-screen treatment of the origins of Christianity. Fiennes is especially impressive as the solitary, combat-haunted warrior whose relentlessly practical outlook offers nonbelievers a ready path into the story of the Resurrection. And Maria Botto brings transcendent joy to the character of Mary Magdalene.

Despite grim scenes of armed conflict and crucifixion, the faith-bolstering benefits of “Risen” will likely sway the parents of mature teens in its favor.

The film contains some harsh but mostly bloodless violence and a few disturbing images. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Mulderig is on the staff of Catholic News Service.



Karen Osborne

COMING OF AGE

Getting older means getting better

The other day, I was invited to play my violin with a real band at a live music festival. It’s an aspiration I’ve had since freshman year of high school, and it’s pretty high on my bucket list. Excited, I immediately started texting my musician friends from back then to tell them the good news.

As always, I wished I could have texted my good friend Tovah, who was my high school orchestra partner in crime, but I couldn’t. Tovah died in 2005, and I still miss her.

I think of all the crazy things she hasn’t been able to do because of that dark night and the icy patch and the tree into which she crashed. Smartphones. Birthday parties. Our friends’ weddings. Trips to the coast and hugs and crazy presidential elections and sunsets. Concerts and ice cream. Happy news from friends. Tovah would have loved Instagram.

As the Internet meme says, “Get-

ting old isn’t easy, but it beats the alternative.”

A lot of people are scared of getting older. Recently, noted Broadway actress Sutton Foster told an entire concert hall that she had just turned 40 and needed to think about taking older roles, which are few and far between. For an actress, that’s a scary thought.

Tovah often talked about the same thing. She had been scared of not succeeding as a professional violist. What would happen in the future? I wish she’d had an opportunity to find out.

So, yes, growing older can be pretty scary, especially when you’re looking at turning 18, going to college and striking out on your own. Growing older means that you lose the familiarity of high school and the support structures that you’ve had, such as clubs, teachers and smiling faces. You start getting bills. You start

getting responsibilities. You’ll notice one day that you’re not familiar with the singers on the pop music radio station. You’ll notice that the world is changing. It gets bigger (a lot bigger).

Whenever I get scared of the future, I think about Tovah. Whenever I get frightened that I’m not going to be successful or feel anxious about all of the changes going on around me, I think about how change isn’t the end of the world. Every day offers a new opportunity. And that’s an exciting thought, not a scary one.

Our youth-obsessed culture would like teens to believe that getting older means that your life is over, and that nothing will ever be as good again. But getting older is really about getting better, about getting more chances to pursue your dreams and getting things right, about being able to help more people, about becoming the person you’re dreaming of becoming. Seen through that lens, getting older is awesome.

Getting older means you get to see the new movies. It means you’ll get to travel, have a family, make your own money and have your own place. You could run for president or start a company. You can even practice an instrument long enough and hard enough to land a slot in a music festival.

Right after Sutton Foster confessed that she was getting older, she sang a tune meant for an older voice and an older actress. It’s a great song, but you can’t really nail it, or understand it, until you’re no longer young. She absolutely killed it and received a standing ovation.

Learn from that moment. Don’t let the future scare you. Instead, let it inspire you. Change is going to happen. You’re going to get older. That’s a fact. It doesn’t have to be a negative one. It may mean that you’ll get better.

Quote

"His commitment to family, his dedication to the law and his personal religious faith are all elements that enrich our culture and society. In all of this, he was, for many, a true model."

Washington Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl on Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, who died Feb. 13. (Catholic Standard [Archdiocese of Washington])

IN THE NEWS

Diocese outside India marks growth

ELMONT, N.Y. — Decades after a change in immigration laws started a wave of Indian migration to the United States, Syro-Malankara Catholics celebrated the establishment of their first eparchy, or diocese, outside of India.

St. Mary, Queen of Peace Syro-Malankara Catholic Eparchy was inaugurated Jan. 23. It covers Canada and the U.S., and is headquartered on Long Island at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Elmont.

The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church is an Eastern Catholic Church based in the southwest Indian state of Kerala. It traces its origins to evangelization by St. Thomas the Apostle in the first century. The church has more than 435,000 members, including 11,500 in North America.

It is one of two Eastern churches that, along with the Latin Church, comprise the Catholic Church in India. The other is the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church.

In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI established an exarchate for the church and named Bishop Thomas Mar Eusebius its first bishop. (Catholic News Service)

SAINTS UNDER 40

Destined for devotion

St. Alphonsa, born Annakutty Muttathupadathu in 1910 in Kudamaloor, India, was destined from infancy for a life of devotion to God. Her childhood began in her grandparents' faith-filled home, where she determined she would belong to the Lord, but at age 10 she was sent to live with her strict aunt — whose primary goal for Annakutty was to make her a bride.

Annakutty resisted to the point of burning her foot in an attempt to make her less attractive. She found her escape in the Congregation of the Franciscan Clarists; she attended its college and eventually became part of the order, taking the name Alphonsa of the Immaculate Conception.

By age 20, however, Alphonsa was stricken by endless ailments and suffering. She still contributed to the congregation despite her illnesses, but in 1946 they eventually overwhelmed her and she died at age 35. In 2008 she became India's first saint. (www.vatican.va)



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Fired up

Author promotes 'radical' choices to thrive and live a joyful life

By Nancy L. Roberts
Catholic News Service

"On Fire: The 7 Choices to Ignite a Radically Inspired Life" by John O'Leary. North Star Way, Simon & Schuster (New York, 2016). 259 pp., \$26.

The idea of being burned on 100 percent of one's body defies the imagination, let alone survival. But some 30 years ago, 9-year-old John O'Leary experienced just that — 87 percent were third-degree burns — and lived. He emerged from his ordeal with a passion to live fully and to inspire others to do the same.

He communicates this message to thousands annually as a motivational speaker, and now he has distilled it into this short book.

John was a boy playing with a 5-gallon gasoline can and some matches when he sustained life-threatening burns that landed him in a hospital for months. The only part of his body that could provide skin for the extensive grafts he needed was his scalp. His fingers were so badly burned that they eventually had to be amputated and he suffered from painful scar tissue that roped much of his body.

But he was blessed to have parents and three siblings who supported him from the start. He recounts that right away in the hospital, his mother asked: "John, do you want to die?" When he replied that he wanted to live, she said, "Then, John, you need to fight like you've never fought before. You need to take the hand of God, and you need to walk this journey with him. Race forward with everything you have. Daddy and I will be with you every step of the way. But John, you listen to me: You need to fight for it."

What seems to have compelled the youngster and then adult to live a

truly joyful, heartfelt life after such a tragedy is a strong faith in God.

His parents, Susan and Denny, raised him to believe in the power of prayer. O'Leary acknowledges that "there were thousands of prayers offered up for me that night, and every day for the next five months that I spent in the hospital." Yet he does not hold that prayer actually changes God; rather, it works "to change and inspire the next steps of the individuals offering the prayer."

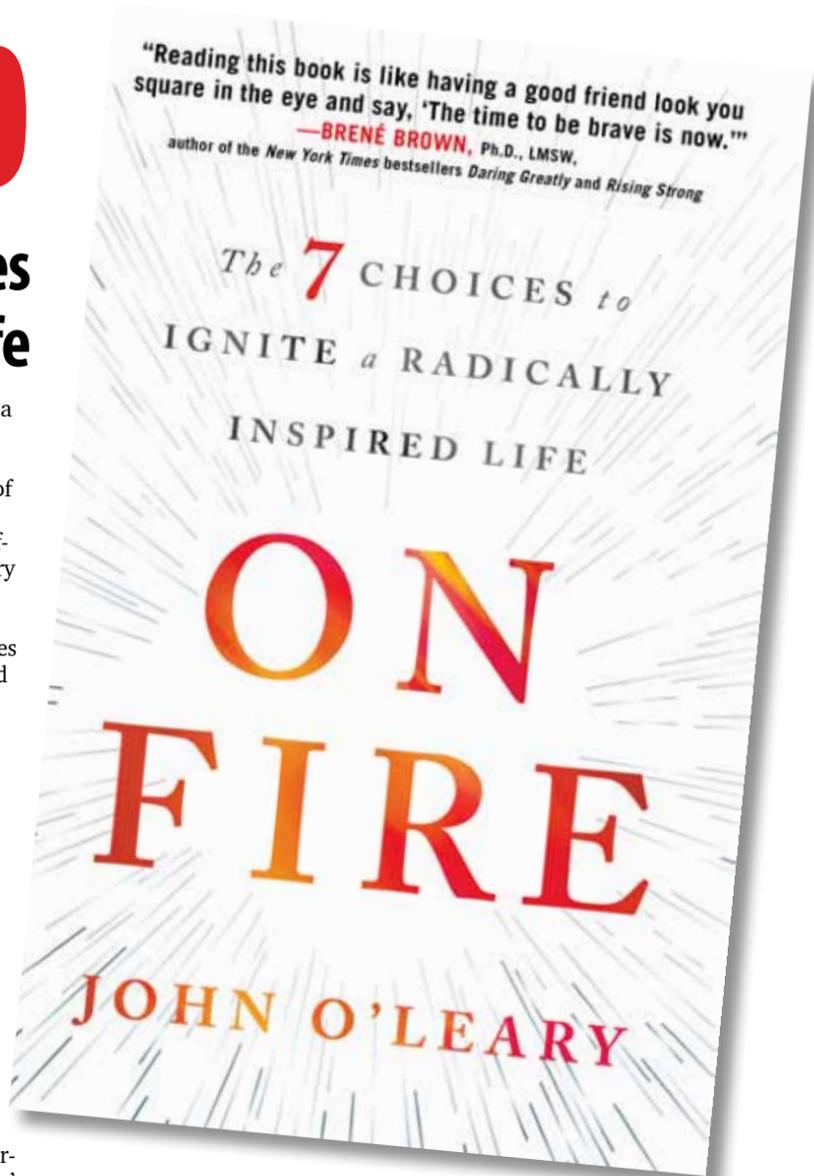
O'Leary, a married father of four, summarizes his philosophy in seven transformative "choices" that the individual can make, in daily life: choosing accountability, self-acceptance, purpose, to be a victor, growth, significance and love. First, though, one must be "fully awake, living wholeheartedly in every single moment."

When we manage to do this, we realize that of the two great motivators, fear and love, only love is sustaining.

In O'Leary's words, "love affects everything." He has never forgotten how the warmth of his family's love enveloped him for the five long months he spent recuperating in the hospital and gave him the courage to struggle to live. As he explains, while "we can't always choose the path we walk in life," love — both human and divine — can help us "choose the manner in which we walk it."

Another key idea is the importance of cultivating a sense of gratitude for one's blessings, however small they may seem. This leads to a positive outlook, whereby one emerges not as a victim but as a victor in facing life's daily challenges.

O'Leary suggests turning on its head the typical question that the victim asks: "Why me?" into "What can I learn from this experience?" Asking the question this way leads to a transformed viewpoint that can



propel one out of the deepest mire of victimhood.

Yet this is more than the familiar "power of positive thinking" advice. In one of the most interesting chapters, O'Leary cites the famous University of Minnesota "nun study" of 1986 that connected longevity with a positive outlook. When researchers studied the journals and lives of a group of 180 Sisters of Notre Dame in Milwaukee, they found that "a stunning 90 percent of the nuns whose statements were most cheerful were still alive at age 85."

What was considered a "positive" statement? O'Leary explains that a journal entry such as "The food here stinks" was judged as negative, while "Grateful for another night of beans

and rice!" was counted as positive. Ten years later, the researchers found that 54 percent of the nuns evaluated as most cheerful were still living at age 94. Their positive outlook made a huge difference, even when other factors such as their level of physical activity were considered.

This sort of background information gives the book a sprightly pace. Written in a conversational style, "On Fire" is accessible to a diverse audience whose common denominator is faith in God and willingness to strive for a more meaningful life.

Roberts teaches journalism at the State University of New York at Albany and has written two books about Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker.



LISA'S CATECHISM CORNER
Church teaching explained to you

Why taking a life is wrong

YOUCAT*: "The Fifth Commandment: You shall not kill. God alone is Lord over life and death. Except in the case of legitimate self-defense of oneself or another, no one may kill another human being." (2258-2262, 2318-2320)

As I reflected on this particular Catechism passage, the same "question and answer" kept popping in my head: "Who made me? God made me." One of the first rote Q&A responses we were required to learn as a young child.

Well, this is why "Thou shall not kill" (Fifth Commandment). Our lives are sacred because God created us. And no one should take their life or someone else's life because of this.

*Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church

Lisa Gomes is the director of the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry



MAKANA'S HELPFUL HINTS
Exciting ways to enhance young adult ministry

Maka'ala (alert, vigilant, watchful)

Today's tip: Invite and lead young adults to participate in activities with their campus or parish social justice committees or local social action organizations!

This year, for our annual Island Leadership Retreat, we decided to follow the theme of the Jubilee of Mercy (happening now!), "Merciful like the Father," which really points us toward solidarity. We invited the Catholic Relief Services student ambassadors at Chaminade University to lead the retreat.

The four students, all in their second or third year, have been trained to be alert and aware of the impact their day-to-day living has on the whole world, which is really the heart of the church teachings on solidarity. The activities they are sharing this year help us to be wide awake to the impact everyday actions have on the world.

For example, the "Where My Feet Have Been" activity goes through the various places people have served others. It's so amazing to look around the room and be able to say, "Between all of us, we've reached people all across the island, state, country and world!"

But the real gem here is that everyone was invited by someone they knew and trusted to explore avenues of service with them ... a living example of the Father's loving hand.

Makana Aiona is the diocesan coordinator for Young Adult Ministry.