

# HOLLYWOOD EYES RELIGION

Nothing scares Hollywood more than religion. To cite one example, when the Christian-themed movie, "A Walk to Remember," opened earlier this year, the Los Angeles Times reported that "The risky subject matter has the movie's executives and religious leaders eagerly awaiting the box-office results." Only in Hollywood would a movie with Christian appeal be seen as "risky."

As it turned out, everyone was pleased. The film did very well: it grossed \$40 million for Warner Bros. It is interesting to note, however, that no one was shown praying in the movie. According to one Hollywood director, Mitch Davis, they "never dared" to do so "because they were afraid to." We now know what unnerves Hollywood: prayer. Showing unmarried men and women jumping from one bed to another is not something Hollywood is afraid of. But showing people praying is enough to scare the daylights out of them.

Though there was a positive portrayal of Christianity in "A Walk to Remember," the lead actress was not depicted as Catholic. She was shown as the daughter of a Baptist preacher. To get an idea of how Hollywood treats Catholicism, just consider the ratings that "Catholic" films get.

The 1995 movie, "Priest," was rated R for "sex and adult language." "Dogma," which opened in 2000, received an R rating for "rough swearwords, bloody violence, controversial religious themes." Last year's Showtime flick, "Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All," won an R rating for "adult language and controversial religious themes." In short, when it comes to Catholicism, Hollywood likes to dabble in filth.

Judaism, by contrast, comes off well. "Stolen Summer" opened in March. According to the Boston Globe, "it is the story of two boys—one Catholic, one Jewish—and the families who must confront their own longstanding prejudices." The plot revolves around the Catholic boy who is told by a nun that he had better clean up his act or risk the wrath of God. In order to prove that he is worthy of heaven, he decides to convert non-believers. He befriends a Jewish boy who is dying of leukemia and comes up with a list of ten deeds that would guarantee the Jewish boy goes to heaven.

The rabbi, according to one review, "does not mind the little missionary selling lemonade and Christian love outside his synagogue, but the rest of the congregation does." Then there is the "stereotypical Irish-American father" who "would just as soon his son not get mixed up in those moneygrubbing beanie wearers." The father is shown with "eight kids and beer in each hand."

To top it off, the kid who plays the Irish kid is not Irish in real life. He's Jewish. His father is a rabbi. And as reported in the Bergen Record, the New Jersey rabbi "helped ensure that the film's Jewish family was portrayed accurately." There was no report stating who ensured that Catholicism was portrayed accurately. Which is exactly par for the course.

By the way, "Stolen Summer" was released by the Disney-owned production house, Miramax. It was Miramax that previously gave us "Priest" and "Dogma." Nothing risky about those movies—Catholic bashing is hardly taboo in Hollywood.