

“RESCUE ME” FROM LEARY’S TIRED ACT

Comedian Dennis Leary is up to his old tricks again. The lapsed Catholic whose stand-up act includes jokes about the crucifixion and who has stated, “I’m trying to get excommunicated, banned from the church,” is currently starring in (as well as writing for and co-producing) the FX series “Rescue Me,” now in its second season.

Leary plays Tommy Gavin, a veteran firefighter and recovering alcoholic. Tommy has an estranged wife, a loony girlfriend, children he doesn’t see very often, and a taste for pain-killers. Tommy also has one more situation he must deal with: he has a penchant for imagining that he is visited by Mary Magdalene and Jesus.

In some scenes, visits from Mary Magdalene and Jesus help Tommy to explore and strengthen his faith. That the issue of religion is explored in a personal manner on a popular drama seems encouraging at first. Seeing a lead character turn to prayer for help in his marriage is not a very frequent occurrence these days.

However, Mary Magdalene and Jesus don’t just appear to offer this harried man some solace. Not content to present an honest portrayal of a man who struggles with his religion and his belief in God, “Rescue Me” tries to titillate its audience through shock value, at the expense of the Lord and the Church.

In one dream sequence, Tommy has sex with Mary Magdalene. Jesus walks in on the pair, declares that Tommy is “just like Judas” and shoots at him. Tommy wakes up before this charming scene can play out any further.

In another episode, when Tommy is worried about the fate of a

young burn victim and waiting for Jesus to appear, Mary Magdalene informs Tommy that Jesus is “full of goddamn promises” and that she has been “waiting for a ring since three weeks before the Last Supper.”

Another plot twist has Tommy meet a Catholic priest named Fr. Murphy, who may or may not be Tommy’s half-brother. Tommy is initially fond of Fr. Murphy, but this family reunion isn’t all hugs and laughs.

Tommy’s cousin Mickey (himself an ex-priest) is worried about how close Fr. Murphy is with Ricky, one of the boys in the parish. After speaking with Ricky’s older brother who reports that he himself was abused by Fr. Murphy, Tommy and Mickey decide to demand the wayward cleric find a new job.

When Tommy confronts the priest, Fr. Murphy shrugs off Tommy’s disgust and reveals that he himself was molested by a priest when he was a boy. And what’s more—he liked it!

Such is the way that “Rescue Me” seeks to entertain its audience. One would think that a drama about New York City firefighters in the years after 9-11 would offer its writers plenty of material. Apparently though, Leary and his cronies need to fall back on the old standby of bashing the Church.

“Rescue Me” airs Monday nights at 10pm (ET) on FX Networks, a subsidiary of Fox Entertainment Group, Fox Plaza 2121 Ave. of the Stars, 19th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90067.