

SACRED AND PROFANE MEET ON SCREEN

Part of our mission at the Catholic League is to review films that come to our attention as possibly exhibiting anti-Catholicism. Given Hollywood's infatuation with films that mock the Catholic Church, we usually do not have to wait long for one to come along. But it is not just American movies; every now and then a foreign movie is released in the U.S. that deserves our attention.

One of these opened in September, made in Colombia, called "La Virgen de los Sicarios," or "Our Lady of the Assassins." So we sent our researcher, Louis Giovino, to review it.

While the movie is not particularly offensive (certainly not in the vein that "Dogma" was), it is not a film to show in religion class. The main character is a jaded, self-absorbed, homosexual writer who returns to his home country of Colombia and takes up with a teenager. The young boy has a habit of shooting anyone who even makes a face at him. Although the writer disapproves, he finds the boy strangely attractive.

The movie is more about the senseless violence and corruption of Colombia than anything else, but it includes a huge dose of Catholic imagery. The writer and boy spend their days visiting churches. The former is a cynical agnostic, albeit he kneels and mumbles prayers. The teenage assassin, although he kills when he gets peeved, goes on pilgrimages to shrines and wears a scapular for protection. Ultimately there is no redemption, just carnage. And the nihilistic outlook implicitly says that faith is either empty or foolish.

However, it is telling how the filmmaker's use of Catholic imagery still permeates the work. Even given the main character's acid diatribes about God, the pope, and humanity

in general, the juxtaposition of Catholic statues, candles and stained glass against the backdrop of violence and drug use provides for an interesting meeting of the sacred and the profane. Regardless of what is intended, a film like this shows that the power of Catholic imagery is very strong.

So while we can't recommend "Our Lady of the Assassins," we take some delight in the backhanded complement the film pays to Catholicism.