

“THERESE” SUCCEEDS DESPITE OPPOSITION

They said it couldn't be done. While making his movie about one of the most popular saints of modern times, Thérèse of the Child Jesus, all actor and director Leonardo Defilippis of Luke Films heard for the past five years from Hollywood studios and industry executives was “No.” Entirely funded by private donations, the movie was made for a fraction of what Hollywood would even consider “low-budget.” Defilippis set out to make a Catholic movie in a culture not interested in explicitly “Catholic” subjects (or “Christian” or “moral” for that matter). Despite the opposition, the filmmakers found locations and supplies suddenly donated to the film. And they managed to complete it in 19 days.

Making a film is one thing, marketing it is another. Defilippis found that a film about a Catholic saint was not welcome in Hollywood. While filming it he was completely written off and after it was finished he was met with comments like, “No one would be interested in this.” He could not find a distributor for the film in time for an Autumn 2004 release. Then, at the last minute, Regal Cinemas offered to directly screen the movie with the provision that if it sold tickets, they would release it in more cities. It did just that. After an opening in New York, sales were good and the movie opened around the country with two additional theater chains offering to show it as well.

“Thérèse” is an anomaly in today's movie theaters—a family friendly movie about a great saint, made from the heart and with the devotion and help of thousands. Contrary to the negative reaction the filmmakers received, the movie has done well in theaters and soon will be available on DVD for home viewing. And they said it couldn't be done!