

Why I don't want to see that film

There are three reasons why I don't want to see the film (The Passion of The Christ).

The first is based on earlier films about Jesus. They haven't helped me to understand him, or to love him or to worship him. They have dramatised events which weren't dramatic when they happened; just ordinary in the sense that many

others were jeered at, scourged and died as he did. What happened to Jesus is epoch-making only because he was not only human but divine. How can a film show that? Secondly from all I hear the film leaves the viewer with a sickening sense of violence. This reminds me of mediaeval Catholicism with its emphasis on the saving blood and bleeding heart of Christ. By contrast the Gospels give us a restrained account of the passion, told quite objectively,



emphasising Christ's spiritual suffering, not his physical agonies. Thirdly because I am Jewish; yes, a Christian, but a Jewish Christian. I know from experience the terrible damage those ghostly words of St Matthew can do: "His blood be upon us and upon

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our children". (Jesus was not in fact rejected by the whole Jewish race, but merely by some prominent Jews of his day.) No Gentile can begin to imagine the frisson given to a Jew when they hear those words. Christians for centuries have shown hatred to Jews and ruined their lives. At a time when anti-semitism is again beginning to raise its ugly head (synagogues in Britain nowadays have to be protected from violence) who can doubt that the screening of those words will stir up yet more hatred against the race of which Jesus was a member?

+ Hugh Montefiore

Something to say?



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Diocesan Certificate in Christian Discipleship

I would like to express through 'The Bridge', my appreciation of the above course, which I have been attending since the New Year.

It was only by chance that I happened to pick up a copy of the December issue, which advertised the course. I have been going to St. Nicholas, Sutton. I know this sounds dramatic, but the course has literally changed my life. I was brought up in a semi Anglican tradition. Confirmed at 14, lapsed for some 28 years, started going to church again in

my 40s, with doubts. Maybe, because I did not know where to look for the answers to my questions. Did an Alpha course, then the DCCS.

I nearly did not make it, although Sutton is very close to Croydon. I got trapped in the one-way system in the town centre, but after 4 attempts I made it - rather late.

From the beginning, everything was a revelation. The facilitators are so knowledgeable and so responsive to your queries. At the end of each session I wanted them to go on. I was still so hungry.

How has it changed me? I am not necessarily a better person, but creatively I am so much more active. I have always been quite artistic, but now I can write poetry, not doggerel, even my wife thinks it is quite good verse, which is praise indeed. What the course has permitted is the channelling of God's grace into me. I have to be careful of becoming too enthusiastic.

Anyway that's the story so far.

Christopher Rimell, Croydon.

Minority ethnic representation in education

The recent Diocesan Synod was held in the new church secondary school, St Cecilia's, Wandsworth.

We were told, in answer to a question put to the headteacher by a member of Synod, that at St Cecilia's 40% of students were from minority ethnic backgrounds but that there were no minority ethnic members on the teaching staff. During the day, we were offered a presentation about the work of the Board of Education. It was apparently so good that the retiring Director of Education said she need say nothing to advance the claims of the Board because they were so well advanced by the 9 persons who offered the presentation. What I experienced however was that the 15 or so minority

ethnic persons present (out of a total attendance of around 110 people) were systematically excluded every time one of the 9 presenters rose to speak, because none of those presenting this important topic was a minority ethnic person.

The presenters included the Chair of the Board, the Director, a school headteacher, a full-time college chaplain, a part-time college chaplain, a General Synod Board of Education official, two college students and a college chaplains' convenor.

Remember our Prime Minister's priority - education, education, education! Remember the minority ethnic presence in the Diocese of Southwark. Remember, too, the money we are being asked to raise for church schools, and this often from parishes with a large proportion of minority ethnic members.

The young people in church schools usually reflect the ethnic diversity of the areas they serve, and Diocesan Synod reflects, to some extent, the ethnic diversity of the congregations in the Diocese. The Board of Education, however, chose to present its work without any minority ethnic involvement.

I wonder if the Director's remarks should have been quite so complacent.

Canon Ivor Smith-Cameron, Battersea

Is this the way to witness now?

I took part in the Ecumenical procession on Good Friday starting from the Cathedral.

We journeyed to Flat Iron Square and then on to St George's Church. As far as I could see it was designed to cause as little disruption as possible and we were lucky to see anyone on the road after the Market.

We carried no banners and no leaflets with any explanation. The leaflets could be used to advertise the services that were taking place at individual local churches and even the Cathedral.

When you consider the area down by the river with all the visitors and shoppers, maybe next year we might have a little more disruption to the local activities so that they might notice that Christ had died. I come from the Catford and Lewisham area where the local churches have all given up their own Stations of the cross processions, maybe this is not the way to witness now?

John Strange.

Canon Andrew Nunn, Sub-Dean of the Cathedral responds:

Each year the Churches of North Southwark, of which the Cathedral is one, choose a different route to walk on Good Friday which attempts to link a number of the churches.

Sometimes the route takes us through very public areas and sometimes less so.

I am grateful for the points that you make and will certainly relay them to the organising group.

We are delighted that you joined us for the walk.

The numbers participating have been growing each year and for those who take part it is a significant event.

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A prayer for peace

A further prayer to add to your collection in the March edition of The Bridge;

*May all nations share
A common form of prayer,
To Him the whole world over
Almighty God Jehovah
Grant that we may have the
collective ability
To provide all our necessities
With due regard to the
environment
And the disposal of waste
To give peace in our time.
Amen.*

It is worth noting that since George Bush toured the countries of southern Africa last year, distributing large sums of cash, there has been no outbreak of violence in those areas.

This shows that the present terrorist campaign is based on the unfair distribution of wealth.

What is needed is a similar campaign to re-distribute some wealth to the poorer countries in the Middle and Far East.

Frederick H Sargeant, Addiscombe

An appeal

I would like to make an appeal on behalf of All Saints Church, in Freetown, Sierra Leone, for unused or unwanted hymn books (Ancient & Modern Revised) with or without music, Alternative Service Books (ASB), robes (cassocks & surplices), anthems, music or other useful church materials. All Saints, Freetown, is an Anglican Church which has suffered a lot as a result of the war, and is now in the recovery process. I grew up in this church having been actively involved in various church organisations, such as Sunday school, youth fellowship, chorister, lay reader and church committee member before migrating.

I visited Sierra Leone recently and felt the need to make an appeal, especially for the church choir as they struggle to lead singing in services and other occasions. I am a member of the Holy Trinity, Rotherhithe, serving as a chorister while awaiting the transfer of my Readers licence from Sierra Leone.

My contact numbers are: 07961584761, 020 7740 1504, via email: Solomonscott1@aol.com or through the Vicar, the Rev. Andrew Doyle on 02072374098.

I trust you will lend your hand in making God's work possible in this continent. Solomon Scott, London SE

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