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Extra

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CN... AT THE MOVIES!



Movie Review: Ignacio de Loyola



As a Filipino product of twelve years of Jesuit education, it was with great interest that I recently went to see the movie “Ignacio de Loyola.” The Filipino production, about the life and conversion of St. Ignatius of Loyola, opened in select US theaters for a limited release last August.

The film, which featured an all-Spanish cast, starts with a scene from the darkest moment of the saint’s life. It then recounts events from his past that had brought him to that moment. As a child, it seemed that he yearned for his father’s attention and affection. Growing up then, he sought the glory in battle that he thought would earn him that; so much so that he valued dying for a cause more than living.

Fate intervened when, instead of losing his life during a French onslaught on the castle his army was defending, he suffered an almost debilitating injury to his leg that would eventually render him with a lifelong limp. While recuperating from the battle wound back at their Loyola home, he became despondent because a hero’s death was not granted him. With little else to do, it was at this time that he found himself reading about the life of Jesus Christ and a book about the lives of saints. He then saw a new noble cause to dedicate his life to, similar to what the saints he read about did. So, as soon as he could, he then embarked on a new quest.

Although not shown in the movie, his journeys had

actually brought him to Jerusalem. It does pick up the story of his quest in Spain, when he leaves the comforts of Loyola, dedicates his life to Mother Mary (who in effect, became the noble knight’s new “muse”), and starts begging in the streets, both for himself and for the poor people he encountered. Soon, he earns the admiration of others, the poor as well as the wealthy.

Among some followers, he starts to talk about “the Spiritual Exercises” which he had developed as a new contemplative way of prayer; as a way of finding out about God’s will in one’s life. Unfortunately, this draws the attention of the Catholic Church’s Spanish Inquisition, which suspected that his preaching, because he was not ordained and the ideas were not yet sanctioned by Mother Church, as heretical.

The movie then delves into the development of the Spiritual Exercises as the basis for his defense. The new form of prayer was borne from the time he sought God as an ascetic hermit, away from the world. In the film, he is shown living in a cave, committing acts of self-mortification in atonement for his sins, in hopes of finding God. All the while, he was writing about his experiences. The climax comes when in his darkest moment, he contemplates ending his life, egged on by an alter ego, whom he later recognizes as Lucifer, the “Morning Star, son of the dawn” (Is 14:12).

Instead, St. Ignatius chose Jesus Christ, “the Bright Morning Star” (Rev 22:16), and the rest, one could say, is now history.

The inquisition found him innocent of heresy, but banned him from preaching because of his lack of ordination and his limited formal education. The movie then ends with St. Ignatius on his way to Paris, France to attend the University there. This is where the roots of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) and the next chapter in his life continue.

Based on a few other books about the history of the Jesuits that I’ve read, the movie is historically accurate. St. Ignatius did spend time as a hermit; at his most desperate, darkest moment... *...continued on the next page*

he did contemplate ending his life; the Spanish inquisition almost sentenced him to burn at the stake. Although accurate, the movie came across as quite dark (dark as in the Lord of the Rings movies, or moody as in the cable series, Game of Thrones); but this might also simply be due to the serious nature of the material.

It's a serious movie and the Filipino production by JesCom (Jesuit Communications Philippines) is a world class film that Filipinos can be proud of. The direction by Paolo Dy was quite superb; he takes the audience from disliking the vainglorious, arrogant soldier, to rooting for him when he helps the poor and when the future saint has to defend himself from the very Church he wanted to serve. Andreas Munoz was convincing: first, as the knight, hell-bent on glory; later on, as a convert who renounces his nobility and nervously starts begging in the streets; then as an ascetic tortured soul; and ultimately as the humble saint who knew that he had encountered God.

In a way, the movie hints at the reason for the worldwide Jesuit emphasis on education, as St. Ignatius, whose initial soldierly pursuits gave less value to formal education, later on in life sought higher learning. As the last scene showing him heading to Paris faded into ending credits, it made me wish that there'd be a Jesuit sequel so that I could find out what happened next.

During the more interesting second half of the two hour movie, it prominently showcases the Spiritual Exercises, which start out with a certain "indifference" to the things going on around us, as key in the steps for discerning spirits and finding out about God's will (others might also describe it as a "detachment").

In this world, that is too full of noise and distractions, finding the quiet detachment to first seek and listen to God, may be this movie's most important lesson for all of us.

For more on the Spiritual Exercises and the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the books one can start with are: "The Jesuits – A History from Ignatius to the Present" by Fr. John O'Malley SJ and "The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything" by Fr. James Martin SJ. The autobiography of St. Ignatius is also widely available in public libraries and bookstores.

As a movie, I'd give it 4 out of 5 stars. Although the first hour had action and romance, and was needed to build up the story, it seemed a little long (his actual conversion could have used a few extra minutes instead). Otherwise, as is already the view among many viewers, the direction and acting (which were exceptional), the costumes and sets (that placed the audience in 16th century Spain), and Ryan Cayabyab's musical score (which would thrill, not just Filipinos), would earn it a strong 5.

It is a definite 5 for its spiritual upliftment and enlightenment! It provides a great intro to contemplative prayer, and so, is a must watch film for Catholics, regardless of the religious order they've grown up with (appropriate for high school age and older).

*May all we do - as St. Ignatius says...
- be "for the Greater Glory of God!"*

"Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam!"

- San Ignacio (Inigo) de Loyola

A BLD Newark Holy Door Update (based on submissions through September 8)

With the addition of a number of overseas locations, the list of Churches and Shrines with Holy Doors that BLD Newark members have entered through in this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, has now grown to **30!**

1. Divine Mercy Parish (a)	Rahway	New Jersey	16. Shrine of our Lady of Chestochowa	Doylestown	Pennsylvania
2. St. Patrick's Cathedral	New York	New York	17. Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia	Philadelphia	Pennsylvania
3. St. Joseph Co-Cathedral	Burlington	Vermont	18. Sacred Heart Church	Dover	New Jersey
4. Our Lady of the Sea	Cape May	New Jersey	19. National Shrine of the Divine Mercy	Stockbridge	Massachusetts
5. Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians	Hubertus	Wisconsin	20. National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians	Stony Point	New York
6. Notre-Dame de Quebec Basilica Cathedral (b)	Quebec City	Canada	21. Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart	Newark	New Jersey
7. Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupre Shrine	Quebec	Canada	22. St. Peter's Basilica (b)	Rome	Italy
8. Cathedral of St. Thomas Moore	Arlington	Virginia	23. Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore (b)	Rome	Italy
9. St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church	Bluffton	South Carolina	24. Basilica Papale di San Giovanni in Laterano (b)	Rome	Italy
10. Basilica Shrine of St. Mary	Wilmington	North Carolina	25. Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls (b)	Rome	Italy
11. Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception (c)	Washington	DC	26. St. Sebastian	Rome	Italy
12. Pontifical University of Santo Thomas Chapel	Manila	Philippines	27. Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem	Rome	Italy
13. The National Shrine of Saint Padre Pio	Santo Thomas, Batangas	Philippines	28. Catedral de Santiago de Compostela (b)	Santiago	Spain
14. Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary	Balabag, Boracay	Philippines	29. Our Lady of the Cape Shrine	Cap-de-la-Madeleine	Quebec, Canada
15. National Blue Army Shrine	Washington	New Jersey	30. St. James Cathedral	Seattle	Washington

(a) Spiritual Home of BLD Newark (b) - Churches with designated "Permanent" Holy Doors, opened only during Jubilee Years (c) "National Holy Door (USA)