

## Some thoughts on watching films

Stories are the stuff of life. They allow us to reflect on all sorts of issues at a safe distance as we engage with the characters, cry with them, laugh with them, get cross with them and generally share their experience. How they deal with the issues they come across may frustrate us, or give us new insights; cause us to laugh or cry; result in us hurling abuse at the screen or willing there to be a happy ending. And through it all we can encounter God in all sorts of unexpected places if we only take time to look.

### Questions to ask yourself

What did you think of the film? What do you like most? Least?

Which incidents made you *think* or *feel* most strongly? How well did you think the film treated those incidents?

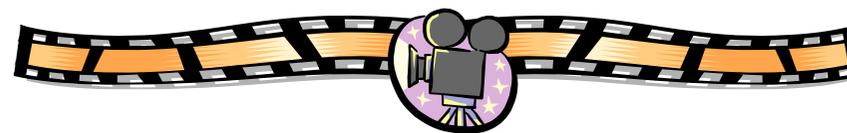
What issues did the film raise for you?

What character(s) do you most identify with and why?

Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values?

### Some facts about the film

- The film is based on an original play by the director, John Patrick Shanley called *Doubt: A Parable*. It ran for over a year on Broadway and won four Tony awards, including Best Play. It also won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.
- The film was nominated for five Oscars in 2009, for Meryl Streep, Amy Adams, Viola Davis, Philip Seymour Hoffman and for Best Screenplay but failed to win anything due to stiff competition from *Slumdog Millionaire*, *The Reader* and *Milk*.
- In the play, Donald Miller is never seen.
- The film is dedicated to Sister Margaret McEntee, also known as Sister James, who was the director's first grade teacher.
- Meryl Streep and Amy Adams were reunited in the following year (2009) when they made the film *Julie & Julia* together.
- Jimmy Hurley is based on John Patrick Shanley himself. Everything he does at the beginning of the film as the same things Shanley did as a boy.
- Although the film examines child abuse and the religious politics of the Sixties, the spark for writing the play came from the run-up to the Iraq War in 2003. Shanley was struck by the lack of debate about the pros and cons of invasion. "Whichever side people were on", he says, "there was such certainty. You want to have a conversation where someone can have an effect on you. But there was nobody to talk to about our ignorance of what was going on."
- \*\*\* **SPOILER ALERT** \*\*\* Both in the play and the film, John Patrick Shanley only ever told the actor playing Father Flynn whether Flynn was guilty or not. None of the other actors ever knew.



**A chance to watch films together.  
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.  
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

<b>6th Jun</b>	<b>Aspects of Love IV: <i>The Road Home</i></b>
<b>4th Jul</b>	<b>Aspects of Love V: <i>I've Loved You So Long</i></b>
<b>1st Aug</b>	<b>Up</b>
<b>5th Sep</b>	<b><u>Doubt</u></b>
<b>10th Oct</b>	<b>The Soloist</b>
<b>7th Nov</b>	<b>The Reader</b>
<b>5th Dec</b>	<b>TBA</b>

**Films start at 5:30pm  
Followed by food, coffee and conversation**

**10 Bletchingdon Road  
Islip**

**Further details from Jonathan (Ox 842214)  
Email: [info@spiritualityonscreen.org.uk](mailto:info@spiritualityonscreen.org.uk)  
Web: [www.spiritualityonscreen.org.uk](http://www.spiritualityonscreen.org.uk)**



## Doubt

*Doubt*, a film made in 2008, tells the story of a popular parish priest in conflict with the Principal of a local school over his ambiguous relationship with a 12 year old boy. What actually took place? There is no evidence. There are no witnesses. But for one, there is no doubt.

\*\*\* **SPOILER ALERT** \*\*\* Part of the driving force behind the film is this examination of doubt and certainty, and how we know what is true. Your enjoyment of the film may therefore be lessened if you know something about how the film turns out. You may, therefore, wish to read the rest of this leaflet after you have seen the film!

### **What is truth?**

The film revolves around a particular incident. However, things are never black and white. Various actions are viewed differently. Things may be misinterpreted. There may be confidences people cannot share. Is there always one single, objective truth? Or are there always shades of grey?

### **Doubt and certainty**

How can you be sure of what you do not know? What do you think of Sister Aloysius? Blinkered? Pig-headed? Determined? Instinctive? What do you do about a conviction for which you have no proof, particularly if, should it be true, it could seriously damage a young person's life? And when is it right to let go?

### **Proof**

Does everything need proof? And how does this relate to our own faith in God, something which, by its very nature, cannot be proved scientifically?

### **The wind**

The metaphor of the wind runs throughout the film. What do you think the filmmaker was trying to say by it?

### **Sermons**

What did you think of Father Flynn's sermons? Short and to the point? Aimed at particular members of the congregation? Too anecdotal? What makes a good sermon?

### **Involving young people**

The Roman Catholic church traditionally uses altar boys to help with preparation of the Mass. It is one way of getting them involved in the church and making them feel valued. As Methodists, how can we encourage our young people to be further involved in the life of the church as a whole (rather than just Junior Church)?

### **Safeguarding**

How do we ensure our young people are safe and that we provide a suitable, caring environment for them to grow and flourish? What do you think of the current regulations? What about those churches which say their youth work could simply not happen if they followed all the guidelines to the letter? And what about those adults whose lives have been ruined through misunderstanding, gossip or malicious accusations? How do we achieve that appropriate balance?

### **Innocent or guilty?**

Do you think Father Flynn was innocent or guilty? Does it matter?

## Memorable Quotes

**Flynn** (*opening words*) What do you do when you're not sure?

**Flynn** Doubt can be a bond as powerful and sustaining as certainty. When you are lost you are not alone.

**Aloysius** The wind is so peripatetic this year.

**Aloysius** Every easy choice today will have its consequences tomorrow.

**Aloysius** Do you believe him?

**James** Of course!

**Aloysius** Isn't it that it's easier to believe him.

**James** Well, I'm convinced.

**Aloysius** You're not. You just want things to be resolved so that you can have simplicity back.

**James** [The children] are all uniformly terrified of you.

**Aloysius** Yes. That's how it works.

**Flynn** It's me who cares about that child, not her. Has she ever reached out a hand? That boy needs help if he is ever going to make it. Why do you think he drank that wine? He's in trouble. She sees me talking to him and she immediately assumes there must be something wrong with it. Well, I am not going to let her keep this parish in the dark ages. And I am not going to let her destroy my spirit of compassion.

**Flynn** There are people who go after your humanity, Sister, that tell you the light in your heart is a weakness. Don't believe it. It's an old tactic of cruel people to kill kindness in the name of virtue. There's nothing wrong with love.

**Mrs Miller** He looks up to him. The man gives him his time, which is what the boy needs.

**Mrs Miller** You can't hold a child responsible for what God made him to be.

**Mrs Miller** Sister, I don't know if you and me are on the same side. I'll be standing with my son and those who are good with my son. It'd be nice to see you there.

**Flynn** You have got it into your head that I corrupted the child after giving him wine and nothing I can say can change that.

**Aloysius** That's right.

**Flynn** You haven't the slightest proof of anything.

**Aloysius** No—but I have certainty.

**Flynn** I can't say everything, you understand? Remember, there are things beyond our knowledge. Even if you feel certainty, it is an emotion, not a fact.