

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?

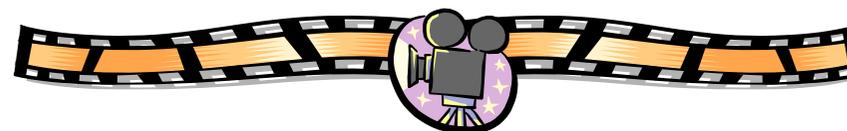
Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values?

Some facts about the film

- The French title of the film is *Il y a longtemps que je t'aime* and is taken from a traditional French folk song called *À la Claire Fontaine*. The sisters used to play the song on the piano when they were young girls, partly because their family name is Fontaine. The song can be translated thus:

*At the clear fountain,
while I was strolling by,
I found the water so nice
that I went in to bathe.
It's a long time that I've loved you;
I will never forget you.*

- I've Loved You So Long* is based on a screenplay by French professor and writer Philippe Claudel, who also directs the film.
- The title of the closing song is *Dit, quand reviendras-tu?* ("Tell me, when will you return?"), a song written by the French singer Barbara (real name: Monique Serf) and sung here by Jean-Louis Aubert.
- The film won a BAFTA in 2009 for Best Film not in the English Language, and was nominated for Best Leading Actress (Kristin Scott Thomas) and Best Original Screenplay.
- Kristin Scott Thomas gained international recognition in the 1990s for her roles in the films *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *The English Patient*.



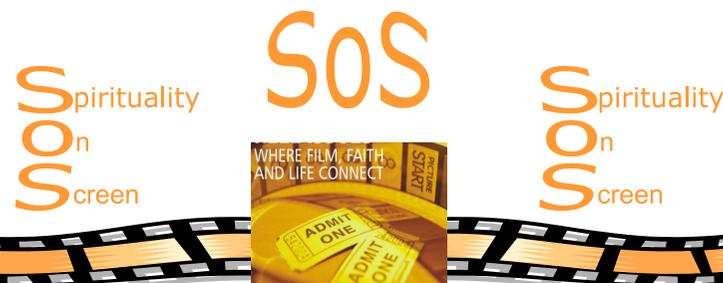
**A chance to watch films together.
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

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

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

**10 Bletchingdon Road
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I've loved you so long

"I've loved you so long" is a French film which looks at the relationship between two sisters and in so doing invites us to reflect on the issues of reconciliation, redemption and forgiveness. Juliette has been in prison for 15 years. Confronted with the unexpected goodness of her younger sister Léa, who makes Juliette a part of her family on Juliette's release, the iciness and silence is slowly broken down as Juliette slowly opens up and finds some sort of release.

Redemption and Confession

Throughout the film, Juliette refuses to talk about what happened. Only at the very end does she open up, yet it is only in so doing that she begins to start the process of moving on. Indeed, her final words "I'm here" are not just a statement of fact in reply to a simple question, but an acknowledgment that she is now once more in the present, rather than being locked in the past.

How important is it in the healing process, for Juliette to finally articulate her deep feelings? Is there a role for confession, when we actually have to put into words and share with our confessor that which has gone wrong, as opposed to some vague corporate expression of guilt and sorrow, along with a blanket statement of forgiveness (as happens in our Methodist liturgy)?

Juliette's crime

When we finally learn what happened all those years ago, it reminds us that things are never as clear cut as we sometimes like to make them. What would you have done in Juliette's situation? Are there any circumstances in which what Juliette did would have been the right thing? Why do you think Juliette did not even try to explain?

Remembering

Juliette's parents refused to have anything more to do with her and, effectively, wrote her out of the family history. Lea was told to do likewise, yet she never forgets, even though she was unable to communicate that to Juliette. Meanwhile, Juliette assumed she had been forgotten. We are often invited to remember and pray for people we do not know, or people who will never know we have remembered them. Does that make a difference? Should we be finding ways of telling people they have not been forgotten? If so, how? What are we hoping for when we pray for others?

Memorable Quotes

P'tit Lys The prince went slowly through the forest. His beautiful horse was silent. The sky was taking on the color of roses. "Will I be in time?" the prince wondered. He remembered what the magician had told him. "Night is your only enemy. Once it has cast its cloak of darkness over the world and you cannot tell the shadow of a dog from that of a wolf, you will know it is too late and that your beautiful lady is lost forever. Hurry if you love her."

Lea Why didn't you tell us? We could have helped you.

Juliette Nothing mattered anymore. I wanted to go to prison. Either way, I was guilty. I'd given birth to him and condemned him to die. And I had nothing to say. Explain? Explain what? To whom? Explaining is looking for excuses. Death has no excuses. The worst prison is the death of one's child. You never get out of it.

Michel It's Michel. Is anyone at home?
Juliette Yes. I'm here ... I'm here.

Coming alongside

Juliette's transformation comes about through the gentle love of her sister, who simply accepts Juliette into her family and then walks alongside her. Are there people you could help through such quiet acceptance? And what about those who may have helped you in this way? Give thanks to God for them.

Having a dream

The probation officer dreams about one day visiting the Orinoco river. He has read all about it and longs to see it for himself. Yet he doesn't really believe it will ever happen. How important is it to have dreams? Are they just flights of fancy or should they be something we can achieve, lest the hopelessness of ever fulfilling our dream gets us down? What about our dreams and vision of the kingdom of God?