



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

2nd Mar	Blue Jasmine
6th Apr	Untouchable
4th May	<u>SoS's 100th Film - Philomena</u>
1st Jun	Gravity
6th Jul	Ruby Sparks
3rd Aug	Hedd Wyn

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

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## 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 only we 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 was nominated for four Oscars in 2014 including Best Film and Best Actress. It won a BAFTA for Best Adapted Screenplay.
- ▶ During the film, some of the flashbacks are done in the style of “home movies”. Although some of these were created for the film, some of them show actual footage of Philomena’s real son.
- ▶ The first Magdalen Institution was founded in late 1759 in Whitechapel, England, with the first in Ireland being established in 1767. The last closed in Ireland in 1996. The institutions’ authorities saw themselves as the solution to society’s moral decline, promising to reform prostitutes and unmarried sexually active girls by incarcerating them and forcing them to work without pay in order to cleanse themselves from their sin. Ireland’s Magdalen laundries were quietly supported by the state, operated by the church, and saw 30,000 innocent and women children enslaved during two centuries of existence.
- ▶ Philomena Lee is currently promoting “The Philomena Project”, a charity which is raising awareness in Ireland and around the world of the issue of forced and illegal adoptions and the denial of access to birth certificates for Irish adopted people, something which continues to hinder the reunification of families.

## Memorable Quotes

**Philomena:** And after I had the sex, I thought anything that feels so lovely must be wrong.

**Martin:** \*\*\*\*\* Catholics.

**Nun:** You are the cause of this shame. You and your indecency.

**Martin:** The Catholic Church should go to confession, not you! Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. I incarcerated a load of young women against their will, used them as slave labour, and sold their babies to the highest bidder.

**Philomena:** But what if he died in Vietnam? Or, or came back with no legs? Or lived on the street?

**Martin:** Don't upset yourself. We don't know what we don't know.

**Philomena:** He doesn't want to see me, does he?

**Martin:** Some people have a problem dealing with the past. Not you, though. But I'm sure he'll come round.

**Philomena:** But I don't wanna hate people. I don't wanna be like you. Look at you.

**Martin:** I'm angry.

**Philomena:** Must be exhausting.

**Philomena:** I forgive you because I don't want to remain angry.

**Martin:** Well, I couldn't forgive you.

## Centenary Questions

*Some questions to ponder and share with others*

1. What is your favourite film of all time? It can be hard to choose one, so begin with three and then, as on Desert Island Discs, imagine two of them being washed away. Which one would you want to remain?
2. Can you remember the first time you went to the cinema? What did you see?
3. If you were able to meet just one movie star, who would it be? And what would you ask them?
4. What has been your favourite SoS film?
5. Stories are the stuff of life and films are one of the ways to explore those stories. They explore a whole range of issues. If you wanted to reflect on aspects of the following with a group, which film might you choose?
  - a) Is it ever right to fight for what you believe in?
  - b) What does it mean to love?
  - c) Growing up.
6. What films would you like to see featured at SoS in the future?

# Philomena

When former journalist Martin Sixsmith is dismissed from the Labour Party in disgrace, he is at a loss as to what do. That changes when a young Irish woman approaches him about a story of her mother, Philomena, who had her son taken away when she was a teenage inmate of a Catholic convent. Martin arranges a magazine assignment about her search for him that eventually takes them to America. Along the way, Martin and Philomena discover as much about each other as about her son's fate. Furthermore, both find their basic beliefs challenged.

## Endings

How important is it for people to know the end of a story? Can there be closure, and peace, without it? The Malaysian airline MH370 is still missing. Is it right to continue to pour money into the search? Is it always the right thing to do to seek answers to the questions from the past? Or is the past sometimes best left alone?

## The problem of sex

The church has often had a problem with matters of sex and, indeed, physical pleasure more generally. As Philomena puts it, "after I had the sex I thought anything that feels so lovely must be wrong." Nowadays, we are much more relaxed about it. Many couples live together before they get married. But where does the balance lie? How do we promote a healthy attitude to our sexuality and physical desires while not necessarily saying "anything goes"?

## Sin and guilt

Philomena was required to work in the laundry for four years after the birth as both a way of repaying the nuns for taking her in and in penitence for her sins. But that sense of guilt and shame lived with her much longer than that, so much so that she buried it deep within herself, not talking to anyone about it. Yet, when it came to forgiving others, she readily did so because only then could she let go and not be angry anymore. How easy do we find it to forgive? Is it easier to forgive others than ourselves? We regularly remind ourselves of God's love and forgiveness for us, but do we really take it on board? Are there things that you still need to let go of?

## Right and wrong pictures of God

Sister Hildegard ultimately is shown to have a very warped view of faith. "I have kept my vow of chastity my whole life. Self-denial and mortification of the flesh - that's what brings us closer to God. Those girls have nobody to blame but themselves, and their own carnal incontinence. ... Their suffering was atonement for their sins." She understands the seriousness of sin, but nothing else, and seems to have skipped much of the New Testament's teaching on grace. Meanwhile, Martin dismisses religion as "blind faith and ignorance", something driven by both what he sees as injustices perpetrated by the church and a so-called loving God who happily lets people suffer. Philomena herself has taken a long time to reach a point where she is able to forgive. How do we find the right way forward in our own spiritual life? And how do we counter the views of people who we feel are promoting an aberration and preventing others from finding the true love of God for themselves?