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Moore's new movie on capitalism explicit in Catholic themes

Sr. Rose Pacatte | Oct. 1, 2009

Michael Moore's new film is "Capitalism: A Love Story."

Michael Moore's new film, "Capitalism: A Love Story," is representative of his mockumentary style, and for some audiences, it may seem less annoying than previous films ("Bowling for Columbine," "Fahrenheit 9/11," "Sicko"). Still others, whose views it challenges, may resist long, hard and loud. For some, it may be considered his best work yet. (The film opens nationwide Oct. 2.)

The trailer does a fair job of conveying the essence of the film, but what may not be apparent is how much Moore's Catholicism influences the film -- along with a sharp, honest critique of Christianity that even Bill Maher failed to accomplish in his lazy 2008 lampoon "Religulous."

Moore's film is a reaction/response to the Oct. 3, 2008 bailout of the U.S. financial system, The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, and its impact on the regular people. According to Moore these people are us, 95 percent of the U.S. population. He takes solid aim at the top 1 percent who make more money than the rest of us put together. He wraps crime tape around a bank on Wall Street; he tries to arrest the CEOs of banks and financial companies. He offers up major, and verifiable, examples of greed, profit, and capitalism run amuck.

As for Moore's faith, he speaks about going to a sisters' school and wanting to be a priest growing up, wanting to make a difference. I missed the filmmaker's comment that he was influenced by Jesuit Fr. Daniel Berrigan, but *L.A. Times* critic Kenneth Turan caught it (See Turan's review now posted on Moore's Web site [1]. Moore evokes strong opinions about capitalism from two priests and briefly, Detroit's Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton (retired): capitalism is evil. He then captures several minutes of a Chicago priest celebrating Mass for the workers of Republic Windows and Doors during their 2008 sit-in [2] when they held out for their wages as the company filed for bankruptcy. The priest tells them about growing up in Chicago when the steel mills were closing down and its harsh impact on his family. The juxtaposition of the Eucharist and the bishops' words as a sign of solidarity, are deeply moving.

But Moore caps all this with his own brand of irony, knowing that context is everything. He uses a few scenes from Zeffirelli's 1977 miniseries "Jesus of Nazareth" to demonstrate how false, how hypocritical Christianity sounds by having Jesus utter the words of insurance companies when, for example, they deny care. When the cripple asks to be healed, Jesus refuses, saying the man has a pre-existing condition. Citizenship is not adverse

to discipleship, the clips imply. Each requires the other -- or how can we possibly be living who we say we are?

Moore clearly distinguishes between capitalism as an economic system and democracy as a political system and then shows that the United States is actually a political economy and real people are suffering. What is the cure? Democracy.

There is a guide available for Capitalism: A Love Story in the themes of Catholic social teaching [3]. The longer version is Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate* [4].

A catechist I know always says, "Everything in the Bible is true and some of it actually happened." I recommend this approach to Moore's films, as well.

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[1] http://www.michaelmoore.com/words/mikeinthenews/index.php?id=14421
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