NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

December Embers 4

Sr. Rose Pacatte | Dec. 28, 2009 NCR Today

Burning thoughts about new films

These past few weeks has seen the release of several surprisingly good films (though some will receive wide release in January). Here are some of the best:

Precious: Based on the novel *Push* by Sapphire -- The newly emerging screen actress Gabourey Sidibe plays the teen girl Claireece "Precious" Jones in a film about courage, hope, physical and emotional child abuse, rape, incest, determination, tempered with a tiny touch of humor and humanity. Precious lives in Harlem with her no account mother, Mary (Mo'Nique). She already has a Down syndrome child by her father (her grandmother takes care of him) and now she is expecting another. She leaves high school to attend a special school for teens and young women trying to earn their GEDs. She is befriended by a teacher, Ms. Rain (Paula Patton) and a social worker, Mrs. Weiss (Mariah Carey) but her mother's irrational rages are beyond belief. She accuses Precious of stealing her partner away from her and violently punishes her on any pretext. The film follows several months in Precious' life. We see that there are people in a limited broken system that do care. Yet it is Precious' own courage and dignity that transcend her horrible existence, even when she finds out that her father has died of AIDS and that she is HIV positive (but her baby is not). Mo'Nique is terrifyingly good as the wounded mother and will get Oscar notice, as will Gabourey Sidibe. I liked Mariah Carey; she was believable though I could hardly recognize her. This is very much a woman's film, though better and more nuanced than typical Lifetime channel fare. The only positive male character is that of Lenny Kravitz as a nurse's aide who shows that men can be kind and caring. "Precious" is an indictment of American society. The message is that young women in poor areas are on their own, but they are strong and they can make it against the most devastating adversity. The question is: how long will children continue to take it? Precious says, "Some folks has a lot of things around them that shines for other peoples. I think that maybe some of them was in tunnels. And in that tunnel, the only light they had was inside of them. And then long after they escape that tunnel, they still be shining for everybody else."

The Blind Side -- Sandra Bullock is Leigh Ann Touhy in what may be her "Erin Brockovich" role that wins her an Oscar. She becomes a crusader for a homeless African-American boy, Michael Oher (Quinton Aaron), gives him a home, and she and her family (husband Sean is played by Tim

McGraw, son S.J. is played by Jae Head and daughter Collins by Lily Collins) shepherd him to university and a pro-football career. This is the ultimate holiday film guaranteed to put a smile on your face and holly in your heart. It is based on a true story and the best-selling book Michael Lewis. Director John Lee Hancock, who made "The Rookie" (2002), takes on another sports film with élan and joy. The performances are entertaining and Jae Head steals the show, one scene after another. There is a Christian flavor to the story but it is one of possibility rather than a moralistic stereotype. This is a film from the dream factory about a dream that came true. Hurray for Hollywood!

All of Sr. Rose's "December Embers" are here:

Part One: A Christmas Carol, The Last Station and Up in the Air [1]

Part Two: The Fantastic Mr. Fox, Brothers, The Road [2]

Part Three: 2012, Me and Orson Welles and An Education [3]

Part Four: Precious: Based on the novel *Push* by Sapphire, The Blind Side [4]

Movie ratings can be found at Web site of the Motion Picture Association of America (www.mpaa.org) and some reviews and ratings can be found at the Office of Film and Broadcast of the U.S. bishops' conference Web site (www.usccb.org).

Source URL (retrieved on *05/06/2016 - 17:02*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/december-embers-4

Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/node/16311
[2] http://ncronline.org/node/16345
[3] http://ncronline.org/node/16372
[4] http://ncronline.org/node/16395