

PAULINE CENTER FOR MEDIA STUDIES

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDES

Movies tell stories about our common human experience and our faith leads us to be more authentically human. These faith and film guides are a tool for us to enter into the media culture with a faith perspective and take from these cultural artifacts ways to grow in our relationship with Christ and others.

The Power of Story

There's a quote in the movie, *Walk the Line*, where Johnny Cash as a little boy is talking to his big brother, Jack, who has been reading the Bible before going to sleep. Jack wants to be a preacher when he grows up. He tells his brother, "I gotta know the Bible front to back. You can't help nobody if you can't tell 'em the right story."

Jack was right about stories. They touch our hearts and reveal our deepest yearnings. Jesus used stories to teach in his day. Movies are visual stories and sometimes can be seen as modern day parables. Using movies together with Scripture provides a wonderful opportunity for group sharing and prayer.

The Holy Spirit in Each Person

Because each person comes to a movie with his or her own background and experiences, every person watching a film will have a different understanding. What one person gleans from a film, might never occur to another. The Holy Spirit lives and breathes in each one of us. Sharing our impressions of a movie, in the light of God's word, can be a powerfully enriching faith experience.

Prayer and Faith Sharing with Movies

The Pauline Center for Media Studies (PCMS) suggests two possible ways to approach a faith & film event: Meeting Jesus at the Movies and Cinema Divina. A how-to for each approach is provided below. These methods have been used by the PCMS for a number of years now with great success but please feel free to adapt these to your individual circumstances. Each event needs about three hours, depending on the length of the film.

Don't forget your license

In order to legally show movies in their entirety in a public setting (that is, anything outside your living room), a public performance license is required. There are two companies who deal with licensing for churches and religious organizations, Christian Video Licensing International (CVLI.com) and Swank Motion Pictures (religious.swankmp.com). Please visit their websites to discover which one would best fit your circumstances.

Be prepared

The PCMS is a Catholic organization and embraces Catholic teaching. Not all movie stories reflect a Catholic understanding of issues or values. Providing prayer and faith sharing guides for films does not mean we endorse what they contain wholeheartedly. We do, however, believe that, in a faith sharing atmosphere, they can help us to reflect on our Christian discipleship. Also, not all films are appropriate for all ages. We strongly recommend that you always see a film in its entirety before using it with a group.

Meeting Jesus at the Movies

Meeting Jesus at the Movies is a conversation-based event. It's not really a film discussion but more of a faith sharing of insights from aspects of the film in connection with the Word of God.

Begin with a spontaneous prayer to the Holy Spirit or something such as...

Oh, Holy Spirit, quiet our hearts in preparation for viewing this film in an atmosphere of faith. Inspire us to grow from each other's insights and let this film story, together with your Word, lead us to grow in faith, hope and charity. Amen.

Read the Scripture, and then view the movie. As the credits roll, lower the volume and re-read the Scripture. Then please give a short break (people will need the facilities!). Move chairs into a circle and invite participants into a conversation about the film in light of the Scripture and the theme provided. Questions are provided to jump start conversation but do not have to be strictly followed. End the faith and film sharing with a closing prayer, either the one provided, or one of your own composition.

Cinema Divina

Cinema Divina draws on the ancient prayer form of [lectio divina](#). Unlike 'Meeting Jesus at the Movies' described above, cinema divina is more of a prayer experience than a conversation, although there is an element of sharing involved.

Begin as above with a prayer to the Holy Spirit, read the Scripture, view the movie, then re-read the Scripture. This is the 'lectio' part of the prayer. After the break, move chairs into a circle and continue with cinema divina.

Meditatio: Go around the circle and invite each person to share briefly what part of the film/Scripture chose them. This is not necessarily their favorite part but the part God is inviting them to explore.

Oratio: Go around the circle again and invite each person to offer a short prayer based on their reflection.

Contemplatio: The leader allows a few moments of silence to relish the experience.

Actio: Go around the circle a last time and invite each person to share a concrete action they feel inspired to do as a result of their reflection.

End the cinema divina with a closing prayer, such as the Our Father, the one provided, or one of your own composition. If you have any questions about *Meeting Jesus at the Movies* or *Cinema Divina*, please contact us via the [website](#).



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