

Mass Sunday: Septuagesima,
p. 147. 2nd col. St. Cyril,
p. 745; 3rd St. Apollonia,
p. 1124.

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Mass Monday St. Scholastica.
One collect as in Mass, p.
746.

Common-Sense Judgment of Movies.

Richard Dana Skinner in the Catholic Educational Review gives some criteria for judging the indecency and immorality of movies.

In any show there is a "theme". And, if the show has merit, the theme can be set in the form of question and answer. The question is usually the problem put to the main character; the answer is the manner in which the main character solves the problem.

Watch the question and the answer it brings. If the question raised is of no moral consequence, the show, obviously, from the point of view of theme, is unmoral. But if the question demands a sharp, courageous choice of right over wrong, and if the answer comes cowardly, evasively, compromisingly, or brutally and sensually on the side of the wrong--and this with the author's evident approval--the play can be set down as frankly immoral. The theme is of first consideration in ascertaining the moral value of a play.

The "plot" is what gives the theme its particular circumstances of time, place, and character. Plot determines the sequence in which the story is told; it narrows down the theme to a given, concrete course of action. As far as moral values are concerned, it is usually quite neutral. But the plot has a great deal to do with good taste and decency. Plot may, for example, devote an unnecessarily long time to detailed and realistic portrayal of sin and crime, with little attention to anything else.

Finally, "treatment", which includes such matters as the producer's detailed stage directions, dialogue, etc., may spoil a show that is otherwise unobjectionable. Filthy dialogue and risqué scenes, calculated to build up box-office appeal, are the dangers to watch under this heading.

Indecency, which usually appears in plot or treatment, may offend against conventions and good taste, or it may be unconditionally immoral in nature. Style in dress illustrates the former type of indecency--in 1900, for example, skirts even slightly above the ankles would have caused a mild sensation. But the latter kind of indecency is far more serious. Long human experience dictates that certain thoughts, words, and actions cannot be indulged without pernicious results. Here it is not question of good taste or convention; it is a matter of moral right and wrong.

Most Catholics, from principles of the penny Catechism, can judge if they want to, what is good or bad, providing they take pains to distinguish it from the "artistic" halo in which it is often presented in the movies. (But it takes a different kind of "distinctness" to make a man get up and walk out!)

Temperance.

St. Chrysostom, who graced the early part of the Fourth Century, was not only a great preacher, but a brilliant teacher, an eloquent orator, and a master of reason and logic. He once stated the true Christian position on the question of drink:

"I hear many cry when these deplorable excesses happen: 'Would there were no wine.' O folly, O madness! When other men sin, you find fault with the gifts of God. Do not find fault with the wine, but with the intemperance. And when you see the same man who was drunk, sober again, approach him, depict to him the ignominy of his conduct and say unto him: 'Wine was given to us that it may produce in us a sweet joy, not that we may dishonor ourselves; that we may laugh, not that we may be the laughing stock of others; that we may enjoy health, not that we may be diseased; that it be a remedy for our bodily weakness, not to deprive the soul of her strength. God honored you with the gift; why do you dishonor yourself with the excess thereof?'"