

Of Gods and Men

By Tom Sims, Executive Director, Cape May Film Society

www.capemaryfilm.org

Religion, can I write about this? Will you actually let me write about a film that is so steeped in its religiosity that you can't help to write about faith and film? Oh, that's right! This is the Easter issue! Could be the Passover issue too, right? So let's watch The Ten Commandments (there have been several—the most popular the 1956 version of course), or Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ (2004), or go to theaters to see Hop.

Of Gods and Men is the story of a French Christian living among Muslim villagers in the mountains of North Africa in the 1990s. They run a health clinic, harvest produce, and generally help the village with very basic necessities. When a crew of foreign workers is massacred in a nearby town by an Islamic fundamentalist group, fear overcomes the region. Political figures offer armies for protection, but the monks refuse. These eight monks are urged to leave by the government, but the villagers urge them to stay. They debate among themselves, not all are predisposed to staying under threat of death. Despite their own doubts, all slowly grow to realize that they have no choice but to stay. This film is based on events of the Cistercian monks in Algeria leading to their kidnapping in 1996.

This film offers a gripping tale of commitment and service no matter the circumstances. There are powerful acting performances from an ensemble of characters beautifully developed. The film does drag at times, and you wonder why the director needs to take you through one or two scenes when sense of place and character have already been well established, but in the end it is a moving story of loyalty that can be shaken and courage that can be disturbed.

The Cape May Film Festival is hosting its summer film camp again this year, and we've already gotten some registrations. If you have a child or grandchild who has shown a talent or skill (heck, even a propensity) toward filmmaking, we encourage you to apply. The camp will be run this year by Joe Stinson, writer of the screen play Sudden Impact and legendary line: "Go Ahead. Make my day." The camp will be held June 27 through July 1, 2011 at the West Cape May Borough Hall, and you can register by emailing us for a form: capemayfilm@hotmail.org.

All of our student videos can be seen at our You Tube channel (www.youtube.com/user/capemayfilm), where nearly 16,000 viewers have enjoyed our student's work. There are more than 50 short films in all, and each one is just a little more quirky than the last.