

Sunday, June 13, 2021



“You like me – you really like me!”

Greetings!

That was Sally Field's impassioned outcry before a crowd of her peers when she accepted the Oscar for Best Actress in 1985, and it has to be **one of Hollywood's most memorable moments**.

The most benign interpretation of her outburst is that it expresses a childlike exuberance at winning such an esteemed award.

A slightly more cynical interpretation (mine) is that she was pandering to the groupthink mentality of the inbred entertainment culture sitting in the audience before her. I tend to share the opinion of **film critic Michael Medved** who calls the yearly event the “largest high school prom in America”.

Well, “that's showbiz...” as they say.

However...every now and then Hollywood gets one right.

Extremely Well-Deserved

The reason I mention the incident is that Sally Field truly *deserved* that Oscar for her role in the **all-but-forgotten 1984 movie, *Places in the Heart***. What a gift this movie is! It ranks as my second favorite movie of all time after Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*.

As I said, every now and then Hollywood makes a truly remarkable movie with a life-giving message, and this is one of those. At the end of the movie, there is an awe-inspiring Eucharistic scene that overwhelms any viewer who has followed the human and moral struggles of the characters throughout the movie.

The movie itself is well-named. **Every aspect of the drama tugs at the heart** as we watch many of the characters reach down into the secret reserves of virtue in their hearts to overcome the challenges they face, which are extreme and presented in highly realistic terms.

And, of course, there are other characters who *do not* rise to the challenge or do the right thing throughout. It's **a movie about human beings** after all.

A few of the actors are names we've become familiar with over the course of their careers, but here they are in the freshness of their earlier days: **Danny Glover, John Malkovich, Ed Harris**, and a few lesser known but immensely talented actors like Lindsay Crouse and Ray Baker.

Eucharistic Essence and Effects

The final scene is touching in itself, but more so when you see it as the culmination of all the action that preceded it. In a sense, that last scene interprets the rest of the movie and helps us understand its **larger, transcendent, meaning**. Perhaps that's why it is so fitting for this newsletter. The scene is a brief glimpse, like a window, into heaven.

The action takes place in a **communion service in a little Baptist church** in a small rural Texas community that is suffering through the Great Depression in the pre-civil rights era Deep South. What the movie highlights in an extraordinary way is the Eucharist *in its effects*, but not in its essence, as Catholics would understand it.

For example, the Eucharist isn't presented here in the context of a true liturgy or as an object of worship. It is presented in its **symbolic and communitarian aspects** rather than as a sacrament because its purpose is to highlight the characters who profoundly live the example of Christ's self-sacrificial love toward their neighbors.

In some way, that might make it more powerful because **it doesn't pretend to preach or teach but only to witness** to something beyond this world. What we get out of the scene is not a theology of the Eucharist, as such, but a view into the Eucharist's power to transform hearts, reconcile human divisions, and transcend even death itself.

The movie does not have a complicated plot, but it does contain numerous interwoven elements, which I've summarized for you in the feature article below, "Human Suffering and Places in the Heart". At the end of that article you can view the **four-minute video of the powerful scene**

Sally Field Interview

Before you read the article, you may wish to view this 1:44 minute clip of an interview Sally Field gave years later about her role, in which she focuses on **the enduring strength of family** as the main message of the film.

(Click on the picture to see the clip, but don't forget to return to this email when you're done!)

In that, the actress was partially right. One essential message of the movie is family, but the final scene recasts all those deeply human interactions as an expression of **the larger family of God, the Church**, without which we would not even know our Eucharistic Lord.

As we recently celebrated the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), our second feature article, "The Sweetest Hymn for the Sweetest Gift", expresses in a most poignant way the depths of devotion that Catholics feel for the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

The blessed voices of the Christendom College Choir treat us to their rendition of the Eucharistic hymn, *Jesus My Lord, My God, My All* with a little background on the origin of the hymn from **the incomparable Fr. George Rutler**.



Feature Articles

Human Suffering and *Places in the Heart*

Sweetest Hymn for the Sweetest Gift



Thank you and God bless you!

Peter Darcy

PS – I post one article a week on the Sacred Windows website and send out this newsletter every two weeks – on Sundays. Your help to spread the word about Sacred Windows is greatly appreciated.

*Also – For those of you interested in praying for priests, I've placed a link below to a wonderful prayer-for-priests initiative started by a college student, "Daily Decade" Prayer Campaign. **Remember:** No priest, no Eucharist.*

Daily Decade Campaign for Priests

If you have any questions or want to add priests to the Daily Decade prayer list, email the campaign at onedecadeaday@gmail.com.



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