

### *Faith Still Comes From Hearing*

I came across a random poll on the Internet the other day, listing people's "Favorite Christmas movies of all time." The top four were *Home Alone*, *Elf*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *Die Hard*.

The list got me curious. Any Bible-based Christmas movies out there?

So I looked up the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), a recognized "authority" for all things related to films, television, etc. They had a list from 2011 of the top 100 Christmas movies (which includes TV shows). Of those, I could only find three that I know have connections to the Biblical Christmas story: #16 *A Charlie Brown Christmas* (Linus recites Luke 2); #51 *The Little Drummer Boy* (a fictional tale that does make it to the stable in Bethlehem); and #54 *The Nativity Story* (a film retelling of the birth of Jesus). [Please note: I haven't seen all the films on this list, so there may be a few others that actually do connect to the Biblical account, but I can guarantee you: the vast majority just don't go there.]

I'm not saying we need Hollywood to spread the Word. In fact, I'm pretty sure we can count on today's television and movie industries to get the Bible *wrong*. Even those who try to tell Bible's story usually get it wrong. Seems they think they can always improve on the original script, or insist on crowding it out with someone's imaginations of how things "really were" or "should have been" back then.

But if the Original Story of Christmas isn't going to show up on TV or at the movie theater, then when and where are people going to hear it and learn about it? Or, as St Paul put it to the Christians in Rome, "*How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?*" (10:14).

That question brought to mind a discussion we had recently in Bible class. Working through the Gospel according to St Matthew, we noticed how far people traveled (usually on foot) to see John the Baptist and Jesus. People traveling from Jerusalem to see John the Baptist at the Jordan River walked about twenty miles—one way! Those who went from Jerusalem to Capernaum to see Jesus went about eighty-five miles!

And these trips were not made because people saw John on television or read about Jesus in the newspaper. They had no internet, no TV news, no telephone service, no newspaper to read. They came to listen and to be healed all because of what other people had told them. All by word of mouth.

What we say to other people doesn't have to be complicated. A little preparation helps. As Christmas approaches, review the Christmas story for yourself. Read Luke 1 and 2, Matthew 1 and 2, and John 1. Then take a good look at what Philip did in John 1:45-46. He didn't try to tell Nathanael the whole story. He just said he found what they'd been looking for and, when Nathanael sounded skeptical, Philip challenged him with that simple invitation: "*Come and see.*"

Yes, come and see. Come and hear. Come and be a part of our Advent preparations and our Christmas celebrations. Come and listen to the Original Story of Christmas all over again, as if for the first time, and encourage others to join you during these special times of prayer and meditation. For faith still comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Spread the Word! And enjoy a Blessed Advent season!