

April 23, 2011

Dear Friends,

I read that many people consider the golden age of Hollywood was during the 1930's and 1940's. That was the age of black and white movies, in more than one way. It was easy to distinguish the good guys from the bad guys and right from wrong.

Among the many actors and actresses who won Academy Awards were those who portrayed famous Catholics. In 1938, Spencer Tracy won an Academy Award for his role as Father Edward Flanagan in *Boys Town*. In 1943, Jennifer Jones won an Academy Award for her portrayal of the 14 year old French Girl who saw the Blessed Mother in *The Song of Bernadette*. In 1944, Bing Crosby won the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role as Father Chuck O'Malley in *Going My Way*. In 1947, Edmund Gwenn won as Best Supporting Actor in *Miracle on 34th Street*. He won an award for his role as Santa Claus.

Another wonderful old time movie was *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*. It came out in 1947 and it starred Gene Tierney and Rex Harrison. My favorite scene was at the very end when Gene Tierney as Mrs. Muir died peacefully in her chair and a moment later awoke to eternal life as the young and beautiful woman she once was.

The other actor in that movie was Rex Harrison, who played the ghost of the deceased sea captain who had fallen in love with Mrs. Muir. He was born in England in 1908 and his original name was Reginald. He had changed it to Rex because he liked the fact that Rex means king in Latin. As an 18 year old young man he dashed out on stage to deliver his first ever one line in a play and promptly forgot the words. By the time he had died on June 2, 1990 in New York, Sir Rex Harrison could be proud of his many acting awards despite the fact he had never once taken an acting lesson. What came natural to him was acting.

On Holy Thursday Jesus gave his disciples the great commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:14). Because of God's grace Christians should be able to love one another from the heart. If we are pretending to love our family, we can do better. If we are pretending to love our neighbor because we are Christian we can do better. We are not actors pretending to follow Jesus' commandment as if we will receive an Academy Award in Heaven. Because of God's grace we have the "natural talent" to love one another as Jesus has loved us.

On the day of our death when we appear before the throne of God, Jesus will probably ask us how well we kept the great commandment that he gave us on the night of the Last Supper. We can't tell our Lord, "You didn't really expect me to do that, did you? I pretended as hard as I could to love my neighbor. It was just a role I was playing out in life." What would we think if Jesus said the same thing to us, "I only pretended to love you too." Love has to be real, honest and sincere. It has to come from the heart. By God's grace we can do it.

Father Paul Q. Gary