

Popular film about Jesus is not everybody's Passion

By Jeff Frankel

A year after the controversial film *The Passion of the Christ* was released, an expert on biblical films spoke at the Sweigart Auditorium about the impact of the film on the world last Wednesday.

Dr. Pamela Grace was the guest speaker for Movies in America, a program that invites speakers to appear at Rider University. She discussed the impact of Mel Gibson's notorious film and how it was anti-Semitic.

"It's interesting to think about films as culture phenomena," said Dr. Cynthia Lucia, Assistant Professor of the English Department. "Films, are something more than simple works of entertainment that we go into the theater to enjoy. Certain films become what might be known as event films, that because of the way they were marketed, because of the subject matter, take on a life much larger than perhaps making a picture artistically."

Grace spoke about several key topics, including the larger story of the film, theology and lessons, immediate sources of ideas and anti-Semitism.

"The film has been seen as sacrilegious," said Grace. This is "a major reason why *The Passion* was accepted and celebrated by young Christian viewers."

The film, Grace said, was



Photo by Allen Huang

Dr. Pamela Grace of Movies in America demonstrates her point about a crucifixion scene.

also a way to help Gibson become sober again through religion, after a long time of drinking and drugs.

"*The Passion* is a product of Mel Gibson's transformation to faith," said Grace. "In numerous interviews, Gibson molded his film into his tale of falling into drinking, drugs, severe depression and his recovery through medicine on Jesus' passion. Again and again, Gibson said 'he was healed by the wounds of Christ.'"

She went on to discuss Gibson's religious background and how he was both raised and still is a "traditional Catholic."

Gibson calls himself a traditional Catholic, she said. "He belongs to an extremely conservative offshoot of the Catholic

church. Technically, according to some canon lawyers, he is a schismatic and not a member of the Church at all since he rejects all changes of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s."

Despite this, Grace claims the central message is still widely accepted throughout Christian followers.

"Despite those differences, the central message of the film is an idea that is still accepted very widely throughout Christendom," said Grace. "It is the center of conventional Christian theology. It's the belief that human beings, beginning with Adam and Eve, were so sinful that they ruined their relationship with God, who created them."

The themes presented in

the film can be applied to everyday events happening today, according to Grace.

"*The Passion* is an extremely influential film," said Grace. "And the idea that filming can, in some instances, be a good thing has huge implications for issues such as war and capital punishment. If God sent his own completely innocent son to be killed for a cause, how can we make a big fuss over sending people to war or executing someone for their crimes?"

When first released in theaters, Gibson claimed that his work was "true to the Gospels," but then later claimed it was also based on another source, said Grace.

"Gibson made several contradictory statements," she said.

Ride-share service delivers students to their destinations

By Randy Townsend

A new student-run program has been initiated by the Office of Commuter Services (OCS) to provide Rider students who do not have vehicles the opportunity to share rides with other students who need to get to off-campus locations.

The ride-share service will allow students to publicize that they either need a ride to a destination or can provide a ride. Outside of the Office of Commuter Services on the first floor of the Bart Luedeke Center (BLC 134), students can post travel destinations, times and volunteer information on a bulletin board.

According to senior Antonio Carannante, a commuter assistant for OCS, this service is a way to get students to interact with each other and be able to get to different places.

"For example, if somebody needs a ride to the airport or train station, they can post it on the board," said Carannante. "If another Rider student is traveling in that direction or just sees that somebody needs a ride, they can contact that

student and make arrangements to provide that transportation."

Rides can be arranged for destinations ranging from malls and restaurants to airports and hometowns. Dave Keenan, director of Campus Activities, said there is an assumption that the average college student has a car.

"Many other institutions have this kind of program, but this is a service that Rider didn't provide," said Keenan. "Although the majority of students may have cars, there is that population that do not and this allows us to address their needs. It can be difficult to be stuck on campus."

Concerns regarding gas, tolls and miscellaneous expenses are to be addressed between the individual students giving the ride and those who need the ride. The service does not set up a contract situation that binds participants to rules and regulations. Although OCS is promoting the ride-share program, all students are encouraged to volunteer sharing rides.

"OCS students could be the ones offering the rides, but it's not limited to us taking peo-

ple places," said Carannante. "We're the link to reach other people."

Students who are in need of a ride should post the information as early as possible in order to give students who are able to provide a ride enough time to respond and make accommodations. Keenan said he's talked to students who have been on campus for weeks on end who never leave the campus, so this has become the first step for commuter students to try and address this issue.

"A lot of students will utilize this service during a break period, whether it's spring or summer break," said Keenan. "Some students may not be able to afford to fly or travel to far destinations where others may be going. The service allows two students going in the same direction the opportunity to take one car, share gas and even switch drivers if necessary."

In the future, OCS hopes that this service will be provided on the Rider website. Keenan said the Internet possibility will allow everybody within the Rider community to access the service.

"Ideally, students will be able to go online to post that they need a ride to a location, or that they can give a ride to a particular location," said Keenan.

Carannante believes that the forum for a ride-share pro-

"He repeatedly claimed the film was 'true to the Gospels.' But then, later on, he readily admitted that he relied a good deal on a book attributed to a 19th century German nun named Ann Catherine Emmerich called *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*."

Grace went on to say how the film was anti-Semitic.

"I'm always surprised that several critics thought it was not anti-Semitic," said Grace. "A few of my friends who are film scholars were not particularly stuck by the anti-Semitism of this film. I was just knocked over backwards by it."

She then went on to say that she thinks Gibson is not anti-Semitic.

"I think that this is not to say that Mel Gibson hates Jews," said Grace. "Or [that] he wishes death on Jews."

Dr. Grace teaches at Brooklyn College and is writing a book on biblical films. She has written for *Cineaste* and *A Companion to Literature and Film*. She has appeared on CBS News and in *The New York Times*.

Mel Gibson is re-releasing *The Passion of the Christ* in theaters today, in time for Good Friday, with a five-minute cut that tones down the more violent scenes including the scourging and some scenes from the crucifixion, in order to avoid a restricted [R] rating.

gram is necessary for the Rider students.

"This service helps the commuter population relate to the resident population," said Carannante. "It serves to create a better bond within the Rider community."

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