

Agnes of God (1985)
Director: Norman Jewison
Play & Screenplay: John Pielmeier

CAST

Mother Miriam Ruth: Anne Bancroft
Sister Agnes: Meg Tilly
Det. Langevin: Winston Rekert
Justice Joseph Leveau: Guy Hoffman
Eve LeClaire: Françoise Faucher

Dr. Martha Livingstone: Jane Fonda
Martha's Mother: Anne Pitoniak
Father Martineau: Gratien Gélinas
Monsignor: Gabriel Arcand
Eugene Lyon: Jacques Tourangeau

BACKGROUND

The Catholic Church considers the Carmelite Order to be under the special protection of the Virgin Mary, so it has a strong Marian devotion. The reforms of St Teresa introduced greater austerity that led to the formation of the Discalced Carmelites who, rather than wearing shoes and stockings, wear sandals or go barefoot.

The Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Edmonton, Canada

(from <http://www.wcr.ab.ca/news/2001/0924/carmelitemonastery092401.shtml>)

"Prayer warriors" might be too rugged a term, but that best describes the ministry of the Carmelite nuns for the world. Their weapon is faith nurtured by prayer and contemplation. ... the Archdiocese of Edmonton has been blessed to have a share of these prayer warriors, who look upon St. Thérèse of Lisieux as a model for all Christians. The Discalced Carmelite Monastery is located about 42 km southwest of Edmonton near Spruce Grove. Known to many in the archdiocese, but often misunderstood, the nine Carmelite nuns live in strict enclosure.... Originating with groups of hermits living in the caves of Mount Carmel and dedicated to God in lives of prayer in solitude, the [Carmelite] order spread to Europe by the mid-13th century due to political instability in the Holy Land. ... [Discalced] Carmelite life is first and foremost a life of continual prayer, which St. Teresa of Avila defined as "friendship with God," or more exactly, "falling in love with Christ, frequently conversing alone with the one who we know loves us." This call is not a call to moments of prayer or times of prayer. It is a call to a whole life of prayer in a community of varying ages, differing personalities and complementary gifts, but each seeking the same **ideal union with God and his will**.

The Annunciation

(From New Advent: Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01541c.htm>)

Mary having heard the greeting words did not speak; she was troubled in spirit, since she knew not the angel, nor the cause of his coming, nor the meaning of the salutation. And the angel continued and said: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end." The Virgin understood that there was question of the coming Redeemer. But, why should she be elected from amongst women for the splendid dignity of being the mother of the Messiah, having vowed her virginity to God? (St. Augustine). Therefore, not doubting the word of Godlike Zachary, but filled with fear and astonishment, she said: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?"

The angel to remove Mary's anxiety and to assure her that her virginity would be spared, answered: "**The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.**" ... Mary may not yet have fully understood the meaning of the heavenly message and how the maternity might be reconciled with her vow of virginity, but clinging to the first words of the angel and trusting to the Omnipotence of God she said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word."... This does not mean that God in His plans was bound by the will of a creature, and that man would not have been redeemed, if Mary had not consented. It only means that the consent of Mary was foreseen from all eternity, and therefore was received as essential into the design of God.

1. Does the movie **violate** dominant ideologies regarding science, religion, justice, or women's place in Lacan's Symbolic Order? Do power relations shift at any point(s) or do they remain stable? Are any mirrors present in the film?
2. Is the spectator positioned by the diegesis as male or female or both? Is this a "chick flick" or not? Would a rape scene (like those in [A Clockwork Orange](#) for example) affect spectator understanding of violation? Is the violence in this film adequate to the task of violation or not? Explain.
3. Is the film's ambiguity achieved through diegesis, or just the narrative, or not achieved at all? Consider elements such as cuts, shots, music, flashbacks, dialogue, setting, lighting, and so forth. Consider the birds in the final flashback.