The story of St. Augustine
Theme of conversion resonates in historical drama ‘Restless Heart’

By Tara Connolly

More than 200 moviegoers reserved their conversion to the Lord during the Year of Faith by attending a film about the conversion of a famous theologian.

“Restless Heart,” a full-length feature movie depicting the conversion of St. Augustine, was hosted Oct. 24 by the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture, DeSales University, Center Valley to provide faithful with an opportunity to enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus.

The title and theme of the movie were inspired by this famous line from St. Augustine’s “Confessions”: “Then hast made us for thyself O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.”

Filmed in Europe, the historical drama recounts the story of St. Augustine of Hippo, who was born to a devout mother, Monica, and a Roman official, Patricius, who became a Christian only at the end of his life.

Like parents of today, both parents were extremely concerned about Augustine’s education and made daily sacrifices to send him to Carthage, where he became an accomplished but dissolute youth.

The storylines deepen when his mother grieves for the spiritual death of her son after Augustine returned to Machacemia, a mail-Tarquinia.

Soon after, he was called to the imperial court in Milan to serve as an opponent to the Christian Bishop Ambrose.

But when the Empress Justina sent imperial guards to clear out a basilica where Augustine’s mother, Monica, was worshiping, her constant prayers and the intercession of Ambrose won him over to Christianity.

The film captures the story of Augustine being named bishop of Hippo in 395 and his lifelong efforts trying to convince the people of Hippo to convert to Christianity. After failing to convince the Roman governor to negotiate with the Vandal King Genseric, he passed up a chance to escape on a ship sent to rescue him by the pope and stayed with his people.

The story of his conversion prompted faithfulness from some diocesan parishes to attend the film, including Rose and Nik Tocci, parishioners of St. Catharine of Siena, Reading, who become interested in the saint as children.

As soon as I heard the movie was coming to DeSales, my husband and I knew we wanted to see it. St. Augustine was always treasured during my Catholic school years. His dramatic conversion is such a strong story,” said Rose.

“We greatly admire him and his story is fascinating,” said Nik.

Dr. Stephen Loughlin, associate professor of philosophy at DeSales, was also part of the audience and said St. Augustine’s books and the movie would not have been possible had the German tribes besieging Hippo not refrained from burning his library during the end of his life.

“There is much to the life and work of Augustine that isn’t in the movie, but then again the medium could not capture everything. Fortunately, I was quite thankful, the avoiding vandals did not burn his books. In fact, Augustine was held in high esteem by the citizens there, that his house was not ransacked at all,” he said.

“The movie is about more than St. Augustine. It tells the story of his conversion as a way of telling all of us about the conversion in our own lives,” said Loughlin.


Left, film credits conclude the film screening sponsored by the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture.

Above, Gerald Alexander Held playing the role of the aged Valerius.