IN THE SPOTLIGHT

THE INNOCENTS

While looking for an “In the Spotlight” vocations piece for this month’s newsletter, I happened upon this hauntingly beautiful film from Netflix. Based on a true story, this poignant tale follows a group of Benedictine sisters in 1945 Poland as they call upon a young doctor to help them deal with a horrible secret.

The film begins with Sister Maria hearing cries of agony during her evening prayers. Stealthily, the nun slips into the night and trudges through the snow to a nearby village in search of a doctor, one she insists must not be Polish or Russian. After some impassioned pleas, a French Red Cross medic by the name of Mathilde (an atheist) agrees to accompany the sister back to the convent. There, Mathilde is dumbfounded to discover a young nun in the final stages of a difficult, potentially fatal labor.

What Mathilde hears horrifies her. As the war began to wind down and the Germans were driven out of Poland, Soviet troops moved in to occupy the region. Coming upon the convent, the Russian soldiers forced their way in and repeatedly raped the nuns, leaving seven of them pregnant and traumatizing the rest.

What follows is an entirely involving tale as the women struggle to deal with not only the physical effects of the assaults, but with the psychological damage as well. The movie deftly introduces us to each of the nuns and lets us get to know them as individuals.

Ultimately, The Innocents becomes a story of faiths tested, both religious and atheist. It is beautifully photographed with each frame like an oil painting. I highly recommend!

Excerpted from David Ives, Aleteia.org