Culture



Cannes from a distance: the Palais des festivals (center), on the Le Suquet bay, is the setting for the legendary film festival. (Sr. Rose Pacatte)



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On May 18 an ecumenical celebration of cinema took place here in Cannes. There was a Sunday Mass at Notre Dame de Bon Voyage Church that is directly across the street from the Palais du Festival — I am looking at it as I type this from inside the press terrace — where almost all of the theaters for the festival can be found.

I was asked to read the Gospel in English after the celebrant, Fr. Mariusz Piecyk, read it in French. Another juror read it in German. We also read the prayers of the faithful in various languages. The parish choir was the big surprise though! Imagine hearing the Sanctus set to the tune of "My Guy" and the Agnus Dei to the tune of "I Will Follow Him." The arrangements were reverent and beautiful but made all of us smile. At the end, the priest said they wanted to add a little "Sister Act" to the liturgy. Another surprise: I heard yesterday that Terrence Malick, the writer and director of the new film "A Hidden Life" was present at the Mass as well.

At almost the same time as the Mass, a service was being held down the street at the Eglise Protestante Unie de France. The police cordoned off the street at both ends, and after the liturgies everyone was invited to break bread, have something to drink and get to know one another. It reminded me of the closing scene of the 2000 film "Chocolat" directed by Lasse Hallström.

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What Tim Walter, executive director of the Catholic Press Association, and others such as Frank Frost, president of the SIGNIS Communicators Forum, are trying to do is connect Catholic communicators with the local communities where the annual Catholic Media Conference is held. There are some process issues involved, such as obtaining references to clear every speaker with the host diocese ahead of the event, but with time, I hope this can be overcome. In fact, the first night I was here, Vincent Mirabel, a member of Interfilm and an author of a French edition of *L'Histoire du Cinéma pour Les Nuls* (*The History of Cinema for Dummies*), gave a presentation

at the local Catholic parish on how to improve your cinema analytic and critical thinking skills. Food and wine were served after, with an excellent dry rosé being the most popular of wines for local folks here.



Rev. Roland Kauffmann, president of the ecumenical jury, introduces the jurists at the ecumenical service. (Sr. Rose Pacatte)

Yesterday, the mayor of Cannes greeted the jury in the Hotel De Ville (City Hall) in the morning and welcomed us — the main festival jury and a few hundred journalists — to a picnic at a former castle overlooking the bay, Le Suquet, where a traditional dish called L'aioli — a mélange of vegetables and cod marinated in olive oil for 48 hours with this wonderful sauce made of mayonnaise, pressed garlic, olive oil and potatoes — was served. After, the jury and the ecumenical host committee went to Holy Trinity Anglican Church at the other side of the Palais. People who come to the Cannes Film Festival regularly are aware of these events going on now for more than

25 years, and some came to this one, too. Once again, fellowship followed prayer, reflection, scripture reading, music and the recitation of the Our Father.

As a side note, on the way to Holy Trinity Church we passed a place where the "Man in the Iron Mask" may have been held. Though we were told that he, a nameless man who may have worn a velvet mask instead, was kept on an island off of Cannes for several years before being moved to the Bastille in Paris, and that this was more or less tourist bait.

I spoke about jury makeup with Magali Van Reeth who is head of the cinema desk at SIGNIS and who has been involved with the ecumenical presence at Cannes for years. Broadening the ecumenical jury to become interfaith juries is a work in progress. Meanwhile, SIGNIS has had a member on the Tehran Film Festival every year for the past several years, and last year there was an interfaith jury at the Jerusalem Film Festival. I told Magali that's the next one on my cinema bucket list!

All of these activities are integrated into the screening schedule for the jury here at Cannes, just in case you thought we were out partying on the yachts in the bay.

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