

This Is My Body Discussion Guide

The film is conceived and tightly structured as a parable in three acts. Within those three acts are five sequences introduced by title cards that supplement the thematic progression of the story. The first card begins at a fundamental belief of western culture: life is a party. When parties turn bad, as life can, it is significant that the second card is a dorm. The dorm represents a confining, isolating place when persons experience hardship in life and struggle with their suffering. The third card represents what many persons in western culture do to alleviate their suffering. They turn to the “quick fix” for their “problem”, represented in the pharmacy, because they are accustomed to a culture of convenience. When the quick fix does not work, though, more serious measures are needed. The fourth card of the hospital represents a serious intervention by a culture that extols human technology and know-how as the highest good when grave matters arise. The fifth card represents, unfortunately, what persons do only when human know-how is not effective in solving their problem. People sometimes only turn to God, represented in the church title card, when every human attempt has been made and failed.

Ultimately, the film is a story about one girl’s passion, death and resurrection. The two main characters represent two, polar worlds, which are symbolized in their race, sex and state-in-life. The girl represents a world of self-absorption and selfish pursuits. Though experiencing victimization, she continues to entertain destructive choices due to a self-centered worldview. The end result of this is self-destruction and despair. The priest, on the other hand, represents the life of sacrifice and self-giving. His life is focused on the sacrifice of the Mass, a life of prayer and service to others. When these two worlds converge at the climax of the film, change occurs. The girl dies symbolically to her old life when she falls to the church floor. It is significant that this “death” occurs at a baptism, which is the symbol of Christ’s death and Resurrection. Just as the newly baptized rises out of the waters of new birth, so the girl experiences new life after her fall. She receives that new life in the Eucharist, which then leads to reconciliation with her mother and the embrace of sacrifice in her newborn. The theme of the entire film is summed up in the last words, which are the source and summit of Christ’s sacrifice of His Body and Blood. When the girl finally unites herself to that sacrifice, represented in her look to the crucifix, she experiences new life, represented in her baby.

Questions for Discussion

1. How is the life of self-centeredness portrayed in the film? How is the life of self-giving and sacrifice portrayed?
2. What is the significance of the chalice being raised at the same time as the party?
3. What is the relationship between the girl’s victimization at the party and the crucifixion which the priest is watching?

4. Why do you think the girl did not tell her friends about her problem?
5. What is the significance of the girl's dream?
6. What is the significance of all the mirrors in the film? Why does the girl always see the crucifix in her mirror? What is the meaning behind that?
7. Did you think the girl would go through with the abortion or not? Why?
8. Why did her mother take her to have an abortion?
9. Do you think the girl saw the woman from her dream or not? Why or why not?
10. What was the significance of the girl destroying her room and shattering her mirror?
11. Why does the girl go to the church after trying to kill herself?
12. What is the significance of her fall during a baptism?
13. At what point do you think the girl embraces sacrifice in her life?
14. What is the significance of the two hugs between the girl and her mother?
15. How does the girl represent Jesus in the film?
16. Who is your favorite character and why?
17. What is your favorite scene and why?
18. What is the overall theme of the film?
19. What would you do if you were in this girl's situation?
20. How does the priest help the girl and how can you be like that priest to others in a similar situation?