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CNS classifications:

- **A-I** — general patronage
- **A-II** — adults and adolescents
- **A-III** — adults
- **A-IV** — adults, with reservations (this indicates films that, while not morally offensive in themselves, are not for casual viewing because they require some analysis and explanation in order to avoid false impressions and interpretations)
- **L** — limited adult audiences, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling (replaced A-IV classification Nov. 1, 2003)
- **O** — morally offensive

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of cinema in 1995, the Vatican compiled this list of "great films." The USCC classification for each film follows its description.

Religion

Andrei Rublev (1969) Russian production about a 15th-century monk (Anatoli Solonitzine) who perseveres in painting icons and other religious art despite the civil disruptions and cruel turmoil of his times. A-II.

Babette's Feast (1988) Screen version of a story by Isak Dinesen, set in a rugged fishing village in 1871 Denmark. A-II.

Ben-Hur (1959) Director William Wyler's classic Hollywood epic follows the Jewish prince of the title (Charlton Heston) after he's betrayed by his boyhood Roman friend (Stephen Boyd) and subjected to much misery until finally achieving retribution for all his suffering. A-I.

The Flowers of St. Francis (1950) Remarkable Italian production about the beginnings of the Franciscan Order. A-I.

Francesco (1989) Overwrought Italian production portrays St. Francis of Assisi (Mickey Rourke) as a spiritual agitator challenging the accepted values of his 13th-century contemporaries by embracing a life of utter poverty and simplicity. A-III.

The Gospel According to St. Matthew (1966) Straight-forward Italian dramatization of the evangelist's account of the life of Jesus. A-I.

La Passion de Notre Seigneur Jesus-Christ (1905) Though better known for one-reel crime melodramas, movie pioneer Ferdinand Zecca (1863-1947) also produced this two-reel (c. 30 minutes) dramatization of Christ's Passion.

A Man for All Seasons (1966) Engrossing drama of the last seven years in the life of Thomas More, Henry VIII's chancellor. A-I.

The Mission (1986) In the 1750s, the large and prosperous Jesuit Indian missions were divided between Spain and Portugal. A-III.

Monsieur Vincent (1947) Lucid, moving account of St. Vincent de Paul's work among the poor and the oppressed in 17th-century France. A-I.

Nazarin (1958) Mexican story set in 1905 when a young priest comes into disfavor with his inflexible religious superiors, the civil authorities and even the poor among whom he tries to live a life of simplicity, poverty and charity. A-III.

Ordet (1954) Challenging Danish production about different kinds of faith and various sorts of miracles, one of which restores a dead woman to life. A-III.

The Passion of Joan of Arc (1928) Silent screen masterpiece portraying the heresy trial, confession, recantation and execution of the Maid of Orleans. A-II.

The Sacrifice (1986) Swedish production in which a group of adults and a child pass through a night of confusion and fear, including portents of a nuclear-devastated landscape. A-III.

Therese (1986) French dramatization of the life of St. Therese de Lisieux from age 15 when she joined a cloistered convent of Carmelite nuns to her death there 9 years later of tuberculosis. A-III.

Values

Au Revoir les Enfants (1988) When the Gestapo discover that a priest has hidden three Jewish youths in a Catholic boys' school, he and the boys are arrested and deported to concentration camps. A-II.

The Bicycle Thief (1949) Simple yet compelling study in desperation as a worker (Lamberto Maggiorani) must find his stolen bicycle or lose his new job. A-II.

The Burmese Harp (1956) Badly wounded in Burma at the end of World War II, a Japanese soldier (Shoji Yasui) is nursed back to health by a Buddhist monk, then devotes himself to searching the jungle battlefields for the abandoned remains of dead soldiers to give them a decent burial. A-II.

Chariots of Fire (1981) Two young Englishmen (Ben Cross and Ian Charleson) overcome quite different obstacles to win gold medals at the Paris Olympics of 1924. A-I.

Decalogue (1988) Produced for Polish television, this series of ten hour-long programs explores the contemporary meaning of the Ten Commandments as seen in the lives of various residents of a drab Warsaw apartment complex. A-III.

Dersu Uzala (1978) Russian production about the friendship that grows between a turn-of-the-century explorer in Siberia and his guide, an aging Tungus hunter whose name gives the film its title. A-I.

Gandhi (1982) Superb portrait of India's great political and spiritual leader comes to life in Ben Kingsley's authoritative yet sensitive performance. A-II.

Intolerance (1916) D.W. Griffith's epic masterpiece intercuts four stories of injustice -- the fall of Babylon, the Crucifixion, the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre and a contemporary American story of an innocent man sentenced to death. A-III.

It's a Wonderful Life (1946) Seasonal favorite about the joys and trials of a good man (James Stewart) who, facing financial ruin on the eve of Christmas, contemplates suicide until his guardian angel (Henry Travers) shows him how meaningful his life has been to those around him. A-II.

On the Waterfront (1954) Classic labor film about a punched-out boxer (Marlon Brando) who, despite the machinations of his shifty brother (Rod Steiger) and with some encouragement from the woman (Eva Marie Saint) he loves as well as a waterfront priest (Karl Malden), decides to stand up to the criminal boss (Lee J. Cobb) of a corrupt union of dock workers. A-II.

Open City (1945) Composite picture of the resistance movement in German-occupied Rome focusing on an underground leader (Marcello Pagliero) hidden by a widow (Anna Magnani) until he's betrayed to the Gestapo. A-III.

Schindler's List (1993) Sobering account of an opportunistic German businessman (Liam Neeson) out to make his fortune by exploiting Jewish labor in occupied Poland but the increasing barbarism of Nazi racial policies. A-III.

The Seventh Seal (1956) Intense medieval morality tale about a disillusioned knight (Max Von Sydow) returning from the Crusades to a plague-ravaged land. A-III.

The Tree of Wooden Clogs (1978) Quiet, richly textured Italian drama about the lives of four peasant families who work as tenant farmers on a Lombardy estate at the end of the last century. A-II.

Wild Strawberries (1958) During the day on which he is to be awarded an honorary degree from a nearby university, a 78-year-old retired scholar (Victor Sjöström in a masterful performance) is visited with dreams and reveries about his past life. A-III.

Art

Citizen Kane (1941) When a Hearst-like newspaper tycoon (Orson Welles) dies, a reporter (William Alland) interviews the man's former associates. A-II.

8 1/2 (1963) With both career and marriage in chaos, an Italian movie director (Marcello Mastroianni) protects his overgrown ego by retreating into surreal memories of the past and wild fantasies about the present. A-IV, with reservations.

Fantasia (1940) Walt Disney's only excursion into the world of the fine arts presents eight selections of classical music. A-I.

Grand Illusion (1937) Shot down during World War I, a French aristocrat (Pierre Fresnay) is treated as a brother officer by the German aristocrat (Erich von Stroheim) commanding the prisoner-of-war camp. A-II.

La Strada (1956) Two-bit circus strongman (Anthony Quinn) adds a simple-minded peasant (Giulietta Masina) to his act, treating her badly until a tragic encounter with a bantering acrobat (Richard Basehart) who tries to help her. A-III.

The Lavender Hill Mob (1951) British comedy classic in which a timid bank employee (Alec Guinness) concocts a scheme to hijack a shipment of gold bullion with the aid of professional crooks. A-II.

The Leopard (1963) Historical drama set against the background of Garibaldi's 1860 invasion of Sicily where the prince (Burt Lancaster) of an old aristocratic family refuses to adapt to revolutionary times. A-III.

Little Women (1933) Lovingly sentimental but firmly crafted adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's story of four New England girls cared for by their mother while their father is soldiering in the Civil War. A-I.

Metropolis (1926) Silent classic of a future society ruled by an aristocracy living in luxury above ground while the workers suffer miserably underground, comforted only by the religious faith of a young woman. A-II.

Modern Times (1936) Charlie Chaplin's insightful fable of man versus machine centers in the artificiality of industrialized society and the anxieties caused by the Depression. A-I.

Napoleon (1927) Epic silent chronicle of Napoleon Bonaparte (Albert Dieudonné) from his student days at a military academy through his rise as an officer during the Revolution. A-II.

Nosferatu (1922) Silent horror classic loosely based on Bram Stoker's novel. A-II.

Stagecoach (1939) In this Western classic, a cowboy (John Wayne) wanted by the law on trumped-up charges joins an odd assortment of passengers. A-II.

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) Director Stanley Kubrick's epic work, co-written with Arthur C. Clarke, is both science fiction and metaphysical poetry. A-II.

The Wizard of Oz (1939) Dorothy rides her cyclone to the magic land over the rainbow in director Victor Fleming's classic that skyrocketed Judy Garland's career. A-II.