Film Posters Inspired by Scripture

October 12 - December 14, 2008

Wednesday, October 15

Lecture by collector and scholar Rev. Michael Morris, O.P.
3:30-4:30 pm
252 McLaren Conference Center

Reception
4:30-6 pm
Thacher Gallery

Bringing together vintage movie posters from around the world along with promotional and commemorative materials, "The Celluloid Bible" examines how the Bible has been visualized in film. These posters, dated from 1898 to the present, include the classic and obscure, the grandiose and camp.

While these posters (which range from small window cards to 9-foot mural-like posters) serve as aesthetic objects in their own right, they are also indicators of changing trends in the film industry's approach to the Bible. Designed to entice viewers to make a cinematic pilgrimage, the posters allow us to trace developments in the graphic arts as well as in advertising and marketing. The posters, like the films they promote, reveal much about the social milieus in which they functioned.

The exhibition includes rare American and European posters from the 20th century, as well as examples from blockbuster biblical epics of the 1950's and 1960's. The exhibition was previously at the Museum of Contemporary Religious Art at the University of St. Louis. The Thacher Gallery is grateful for their expertise and assistance with this exhibition.

"The Celluloid Bible" draws on the extensive collection of film posters of scholar Rev. Michael Morris, O.P. A Professor of Religion and the Arts at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Morris writes for both scholarly and popular publications. His biography of the wife of the actor Rudolph Valentino (Madam Valentino: The Many Lives of Natacha Rambova, Abbeville Press, 1991) was named by The New York Times as one of the Notable Books of the Year.