

Candidate 4

How is the importance of religion depicted by religious figures, Catholic Priest- Père Jean and Protestant nurse- Annette Monod, when humanity is questioned in Louis Malle's 'Au Revoir, les enfants' and Rose Bosch's 'La Rafle'?

Both the autobiographical novel 'Au Revoir, les enfants' by Louis Malle and the film 'La Rafle' directed by Rose Bosch are set during World War II. Undeniably, though they take very different perspectives of the war ('Au Revoir, les enfants' takes place mainly at a Catholic boarding school populated by the young sons of the French upper class whereas 'La Rafle' follows the story of Jewish families who are taken from their homes and transported to various concentration camps), both show characters who are willing to set their own religious beliefs aside when the humanity of a situation is called into question. In 'Au Revoir, les enfants' Père Jean hides Jewish boys who have been separated from their families in his Catholic boarding school, despite his beliefs, Père Jean recognises that the morality of the situation is more important than religion and puts his own life on the line to protect the boys. Annette Monod in 'La Rafle' works herself till she becomes physically ill in order to look after and protect the Jewish children despite the historical conflict between the 2 religions as she cannot understand how their religion has anything to do with how they should be treated and only sees the lack of morality in the situation.

Père Jean is the Priest in charge of the Catholic Boarding School who hides young, Jewish boys from the gestapo. Historically, Catholics and Jews do not get along but Père Jean looks past this animosity as he recognises the horrors of war call for his humanity rather than his power in religion.

LE PERE JEAN: "...nous vivons des temps de discorde et de haine. Le mensonge est tout-puissant, les chrétiens s'entre-tuent, ceux qui devraient nous guider nous trahissent. Plus que jamais, nous devons nous garder de l'égoïsme et de l'indifférence. »¹

Père Jean undoubtedly holds his religion in high esteem, he maintains Catholic ceremonies, values and traditions, however, he is a highly moral man because of his religion, and his decision to hide Jews in the school eventually costs him his life: he could not sit aside and let the boys die without it playing on his conscience. His religion focuses heavily on community, common good and

¹ 'Au Revoir, Les Enfants', Louis Malle, Editions Gallimard, 1987, p107

freedom from oppression, he preaches this to the boys and also teaches that even those who are oppressed or who do not follow the same religion are worthy of the same treatment and protection:

LE PERE JEAN: “Ne rendez à personne le mal pour le mal. Si ton ennemi a faim, donne-lui à manger. S’il a soif, donne-lui à boire.’ Nous allons prier pour ceux qui souffrent, ceux qui ont faim, ceux que l’on persécute. Nous allons prier pour les victimes, et aussi pour les bourreaux. »²

Malle uses this to show the futility of war: there is no reason to fight against the Jews and Malle uses Julien and Jean to portray the similarities between the Jews and Catholics. Père Jean’s humanity is incredibly admirable, especially amongst the wealthy upper class parents of the boys who mostly take a more relaxed approach to the war with their entitled view of life and more rigid Catholic beliefs which they agree with or have no opinion on the Nazi party or the causes of the war. Père Jean knows that these boys could be led by their parents’ passivity, so leads by example ensuring the boys are knowledgeable about the war, and its battles and causes which are indeed oppositional to their religion and humanity itself.

Similarly, to Père Jean, the protestant nurse, Annette Monod, recognises that her religion, or the religion of the children and families she is looking after, is not important to the situation. The anti-Semitism at the root of the war is not important to Monod, she represents the good in French and is almost like a symbol of hope to the young Jewish children. She understands that Protestants and Jews are alike in almost every way except religion and cannot comprehend how the Germans and French (it is the French police who round up the Jews to take them to the velodrome and the French army who keep them in the French concentration camps) can tear apart families and slaughter their children: “*C’est impossible*” (La Rafle: 1:49:08³).

Annette is horrified when she arrives at the Vélodrome d’Hiver and sees all the Jewish families and the conditions that they are being forced to live in. All the nurses and doctors working in the velodrome are having to combat the squalor, infection and disease and Monod does not understand why these Jewish families are being rounded up and forced into these conditions all

² ‘Au Revoir, Les Enfants’, Louis Malle, Editions Gallimard, 1987, p108

³ ‘La Rafle’, Rose Bosch, 2010, 1:49:08

because of their religion. She is able to put aside her own religion and the animosity between Christians and Jews as she knows this is a case of humanity and not religion. Bosch uses the character of Annette Monod to comment on the absurdity of the war, Monod does not understand why everyone else cannot see beyond their own religion and see that these are simply human beings who need their help in much the same way that Malle uses Père Jean. Monod works day and night to try and help the children when others will not, even when she herself eats only what the children are given in the camp, showing her extreme selflessness and utter disbelief at the barbarity of the situation.

In 'Au Revoir, les enfants', Malle demonstrates the importance of religion to Père Jean when he is giving communion to the boys:

« Le Père Jean s'avance vers eux, ciboire à la main. Il approche l'hostie de la bouche de Bonnet. Quand il le reconnaît, sa main se fige. Rapide échange de regards entre Bonnet, Julien et le Père Jean. Celui-ci dépose l'hostie sur la langue de Julien et continue. »⁴

Père Jean risks the discovery of Bonnet when he does not give him communion but, despite his morals and humanity, he is unable to go against his religion and give a non-Catholic communion. This is the only time in the play when Père Jean puts religion above humanity. In the catholic religion communion is an incredibly important ceremony for the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice, Père Jean truly values his religion and holds it in high regard and could not force it upon a young boy who is not a part of this community and does not truly understand the value of the ceremony. In a way this makes Père Jean more human, he still maintains his religious fidelity yet still shows, the apparent enemy, compassion and humanity.

In the restaurant scene, Julien does not even know his own religion asking if his family are Jews, he is naïve, spoiled and over-confident, a direct contrast with the shy, reserved and terrified Jean Bonnet. Bonnet does not know where his family are and looks on in horror knowing that he could have been in place of the Jewish man at the restaurant. Julien also asks his older brother what a Jew is:

JULIEN: François, qu'est-ce que c'est un youpin?

⁴ 'Au Revoir, Les Enfants', Louis Malle, Editions Gallimard, 1987, p108/9

FRANCOIS : Un juif.

JULIEN : Je sais ! Mais c'est quoi exactement?⁵

This shows Julien's lack of understanding of other religions and what the reasons are for prejudice towards a religion different to his own. Near the beginning of the play we hear of Julien's aspirations to become a priest, however this is a childish dream much like a young boy's dream nowadays of becoming a policeman or fireman. An interesting point to note is that this is an autobiographical play and the character of Julien Quentin is based on Louis Malle himself, who, of course, became a director and screenwriter. He chose a profession where, much like a Priest, he can deliver a message and, much like his hero Père Jean, Malle's message is not only of religion but of humanity and the realities of war.

Religion is highlighted as a key theme in Bosch's 'La Rafle' through the character of Annette. Annette is protestant, and we often see her holding the crucifix around her neck, particularly evident in the scene outside the Vélo d'Hiver when talking to the policeman:

Annette: "Allez-y! Démissionnez! Allez-y! Rebellez-vous! Pas un seul d'entre vous n'en l'a fait! »⁶

Her religion gives her strength and faith in herself, yet she soon realises that this strength and belief in humanity has dissipated in her fellow countrymen due to the oppression of the war. Fellow Christians are hiding behind the actions of the Germans, so as to justify their inhumane actions or indeed, their passivity as they do not stand up against what they know as to be barbaric actions. This is what Annette calls on this officer to do. Her words echo those of Père Jean in his sermon on P108:

Annette: Ils manquent de tout!...Des ordres pour affamer des enfants ? »⁷

Throughout both films religious figures put their religion second to help others of a different religion because they know it is the humane thing to do. Père Jean hides several Jewish boys in his catholic school in order to protect them from the harsh reality of war they would otherwise face. Annette Monod in Rose Bosch's 'La Rafle' risks life and limb to keep the young Jewish children safe and well in the velodrome and concentration camps where they are being

⁵ 'Au Revoir, Les Enfants', Louis Malle, Editions Gallimard, 1987, p85

⁶ 'La Rafle', Rose Bosch, 2010, 1:06:31.

⁷ 'La Rafle', Rose Bosch, 2010, 1:06:59

held. Both of these characters' heroic actions enable the children to mature and realise the effect and cause of the war. Through Père Jean's actions and his friendship with Jean Bonnet, Julien Quentin develops an understanding and awareness that humanity is a greater priority than religion. Annette Monod's strength of faith ensures that Joe, Simon and Nono develop a modicum of trust in adults and human kindness, as she is unfaltering in her care and protection of the children.

Word Count: 1647

Bibliography

'Au Revoir, les enfants', Louis Malle, Editions Gallimard, 1987

'La Rafle', Roselyn Bosch, Menemsha Films, 2010

<http://www.filmeducation.org/pdf/resources/primary/La%20Rafle%20Resource.pdf> [Accessed: 21.11.18]

University of Stirling Lecture Notes – Au Revoir, les enfants – provided by teacher.

http://programmes.france2.fr/la-rafle-du-vel-dhiv-une-histoire-francaise/index.php?page=article&numsite=5126&id_rubrique=5132&id_article=15440 [Accessed 28.10.18]

<http://www.20minutes.fr/cinema/600832-cinema-la-realisatrice-la-rafle-compare-spectateursinsensibles-film-hilter> [Accessed 19.11.18]

<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=EE05E7DF173BBA2CA34B4CC9B679988C6896> [Accessed: 24.1.18]

http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm_gen_cfilm=2725.html [Accessed 5.12.17]

<http://www.telerama.fr/cinema/films/au-revoir-les-enfants,10247,critique.php> [Accessed 5.10.18]

To be completed by the candidate

The grid below allows entries to be made covering the options detailed on the previous page.

Please tick (✓) the option chosen and note the portfolio title. A tick (✓) should also be entered to confirm the inclusion of the bibliography, and the word count should be indicated.

Portfolio option (please tick (✓) <u>one</u> option only)		
Literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Media	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Language in Work	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Portfolio title	<p><i>How is the importance of religion depicted by religious figures, Catholic Priest - Père Jean and Protestant nurse-Annette Monod, when humanity is questioned in Louis Malle's 'Au Revoir Les Enfants' and Rose Bosch's 'La Rafle'?</i></p>	
Bibliography enclosed (please tick) (✓)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Word count (excluding quotations and bibliography)	1617	

If you are producing a handwritten portfolio piece, you must use blue or black ink.