



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on April 4, 2011

“Of Gods and Men”: A Modern Story of Faith

Inspired by real-life events, it is simply a beautiful story of faith. The film opens silently, befitting the cloistered life of the small group of Christians, with only ambient sounds of shuffling feet and chirping birds to break the silence of monastic life. The monks live peacefully with the largely Muslim population of Algiers, and tend to the medical needs of a tiny village that grew up around the monastery, participating in the lives of the villagers, dispensing advice, keeping a garden, and producing honey from their hives.



The Benedictine community becomes troubled, though, as religious extremists begin to terrorize fellow Muslims. A late-night visit to the abbey by a few extremists ends safely enough, but is only the beginning of violent episodes that will plague the region. The religious brothers are caught between a corrupt military government and violent acts carried out by the extremists. The brothers are encouraged to leave the monastery, but the initial refusal of their leader causes dissension within the order, and brings to the surface the most basic questions of faith. Each monk struggles with self-doubt, deciding if staying would be, as one put it, an act of collective suicide, or if leaving would betray not only their obligations to the villagers but, ultimately, their vows to God.

The accomplished actors adapt their expert performances to the rhythms of monastic life crafted by the director, and their portrayals of kind-hearted and faithful Christians are captivating. The pacing of the film is superb, and the lack of a musical score serves to draw the viewer into the quiet goodness and faith of the monks' lives.

Each brother eventually decides that the only decision is to stay. Christian, the group's superior, sums up their sentiments when he encourages an especially troubled brother by reminding him that when they chose the religious life, they gave up any claim to their own lives, and from that point on, belonged to the Lord. They lived their Christian faith, and in the ironic, but inevitable, clash of religions, served as wonderful examples of placing absolute trust in God — examples which are sorely needed in the modern world. The film portrays the practice of Christianity as sometimes uncertain, sometimes dangerous, and always practiced by faulty humans, but these religious brothers know and feel the peace that passes all understanding.

The film is a truly inspiring story about the timeless struggle to fight the good fight despite the temptations and consequences, and the ultimate victory found in trusting God no matter what happens during our earthly existence. The film is rated PG-13 because of a few scenes of graphic wartime violence, and the utterance of a bad word (in French).



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