

Finding God in Film: Young Filmmakers Showcase their Work at WYD's 3rd Iñigo Film Festival (TIFF)

The 3rd Iñigo Film Festival was launched in Madrid on Tuesday, August 16, at the height of the World Youth Day celebrations. Sponsored by the Jesuit Conference of European Provincials, the festival included select short films from all over the world. Like the previous festivals, this year's focused on young filmmakers grappling with the spiritual dimensions of life. It honored films which reflect the spiritual yearnings and experiences of young people today by indicating the presence and/or absence of God in our modern secularized world or by taking into account the twin dimensions of faith and justice.

The three best short films received "Iñigo Awards": a first prize of 2.500 EUR, a second prize of 1.500 EUR, and a third prize 1.000 EUR. There were two additional Awards: one to a film chosen by the audience, "Audience Award" (non-monetary), and the "Fidel Goetz Emerging Film Maker Award", which includes top-of-the-line professional editing software (FCP Studio Pro) and a travel stipend for the festival. Each prize is accompanied by an additional professional software bundle by Showbiz (Hollywood).

The winner was *Smolarze* (POLAND), by Piotr Zlotorowicz. His film, whose title means *Charcoal Burners*, explores the everyday life of Marek and Janina, charcoal burners in the Bieszczady Mountains in Poland. Far from civilization, in the heart of the mountains, they live according to the rhythm set by nature. The documentary follows the man and the woman from dawn till dusk, observing the slow passage of time, in a visual anthem to the beauty of life. The director trusts his characters and visual style and demonstrates what movies do best: telling an emotional story.

Second prize went to *5 Minutes Each* (CANADA/SERBIA/MONTENEGRO) by Vojin Vasovic. The film is a metaphorical story about the constant struggle of the artist to reach those five minutes of limelight — a tale about an upswing and downfall, with the climax appearing concurrently and unexpectedly. Using animation, the director shows the longing of the contemporary world for fame and glory.

Third prize went to *The Song of Wandering Eamonn* (IRELAND/UK) by Conor Heffernan. The "Catholic Conscience of Ireland" wanders the Irish countryside as the main character Eamonn. With Eamonn we can follow the past and the present of the history and

struggles of Irish Catholicism in a very poetical and expressive way.

The “Fidel Goetz Emerging Film Maker Award” went to a Sri Lankan film *Regrets* by Shalini Tharmalingam. The story tells how a woman regrets a crucial decision in her past. The film shows that a disability is not an inability, and that people should not be rejected because of their disability.

The Audience Award went to *The Moment*, an Irish film by Paddy Slattery. With poignant and haunting images, the filmmaker shows the last minutes of life of a dying man - a sensitive and emotional approach to one of the great taboos of our society: death.

This year TIFF also presented a world premiere: *I Want to Fly* by Sri Lankan director Indrajith Mahawaduge, who won the Audience Award six years ago for his first film. The director tells the story of a young man who, due to social ostracism, is not able to live with the man he loves.

The program includes 18 international films, selected from more than one hundred submissions, each of which explored the general theme “City of God.” Categories included narrative fiction as well as animated and documentary films. The festival’s single theme cannot be said to have constrained the young filmmakers, as the submissions clearly proved. The composition of the films is much variegated. Among them, you can find exciting, thought-provoking ones as well as unsettled or funny ones. Through these films, you get an amazing impression of the varicolored, manifold and inspiring work of young filmmakers from all over the world, for example, in the US, Israel, Japan, Poland, Sri Lanka, Ireland, Pakistan, Germany.

The Jesuits support the Iñigo Film Festival, to encourage young filmmakers who reflect on spirituality and faith in their own way and who visualize the cultural and social variety of the legacy of God in the world – because “finding and searching for God in all things” means not only within religious rituals, in nature or in the encounter with others, but also in films, as pope John Paul II said: “The cinema enjoys a wealth of languages, a multiplicity of styles and a variety of narrative forms that are truly great. It thus offers an incomparable storehouse of expressive means for portraying the various areas in which the human being finds himself and for interpreting his inescapable calling to the beautiful, the universal and the absolute.”

The success of TIFF would not be possible without the great financial support of the

Jesuit Conference of European Provincials, the German Jesuit Province, the Suisse Jesuit Province, the Irish Jesuit Province, the British Jesuit Province, the South Belgium Jesuit Province, the Jesuit Missions in Nuremberg and Zurich, and other private and commercial contributors and foundations interested in religious film and other media for youth. The reactions of both the large audiences and the film makers themselves encourage festival director Fr. Christof Wolf, S.J. (Loyola Productions Munich, Germany) to continue with the “Jesuit Oscars” (as some in the press call them), which will be held next time in Rio De Janeiro (Brazil) in 2013 again in conjunction with the WYD. (www.tiffestival.org)