

A Review of *The Chosen*  
by Dc. David Dawson

Like many Catholics, I can be weary of books or movies made by non-Catholics. What aspect of us will they make fun of now? Where will their theology diverge from ours? I asked myself these same questions when I heard about *The Chosen*. I had seen advertisements for it these past few weeks but chalked it up to another low production boring old telling of the Gospels. A friend mentioned that a popular priest personality on YouTube was watching it with his religious order which then made me give it some serious consideration. With the quarantine full and in effect and not wanting to binge watch old *Alley McBeal* or *Grey's Anatomy* episodes, I thought I would give this a chance.

*The Chosen* is a multi series drama based on the life of Christ. It was created by Dallas Jenkins whose father, Jerry Jenkins, rose to fame for his *Left Behind* books. Jenkins and his father are both non-denominational so with that aspect and the idea of them jumping on this multi series money making Netflix type bandwagon, I wasn't expecting much when it came to putting the life of Christ on television. I have to admit, I was dead wrong. This series is excellent and I didn't want it to end.

Ok, so warning! If you keep reading there may be some spoilers but if you have read the Gospels or even heard them in church, then you already know how the story goes. The series begins with Mary of Magdala as a small child with her dad when she goes to him after becoming scared while sleeping. Now this is a minor detail and one I would not usually mention except for one important fact, her father recites to her from Isaiah 43. Now why is this important? Because so much of the Gospel accounts draw on Old Testament scripture. You cannot truly understand who the Messiah is and what Israel expected if you do not understand the writings of Moses and the prophets. Immediately, I was impressed and realized this would not be the same tired retelling. I began to think that this was going to be different than other portrayals and I was right! *The Chosen* repeatedly leans on Old Testament scripture throughout the series and relates it to Christ.

As the show continued I became a little hesitant with the actors we were immediately introduced to, especially with Brandon Potter who plays the Roman magistrate, "Quintus". His acting seemed forced and a bit over the top as he tried to portray a wormy Roman leader. However, my worries were soon relieved as we were introduced to one of the main characters "Simon-Peter" portrayed by Shahar Isaac. Isaac does a phenomenal job as "Simon" making him into a normal, everyday person to which most can relate. Simon definitely isn't a saint or at least not yet. I appreciated that initial portrayal as he was a fisherman and I think the human aspect of this show is what truly impressed me. There was one humorous part involving Simon-Peter that broached the question I often asked myself as a child. Simon was troubled and Jesus asks him what is wrong to which Simon replies, "What, you are telling me you don't already know what's in my head?" Jesus says, "That is a conversation for another time." I appreciated this little addition and the show's creators not being scared to address it with some humor. I think their

point was to allow the viewer to see the people that Christ called by name as normal, average human beings, sins and all. In addition, a refreshing aspect of this show is that in a way, it is told from more of the disciples perspectives and reaches into their faults as well as their goodness.

Finally, it isn't until the very end of the first episode that we are introduced to Jesus played by Jonathan Roumie, a practicing Catholic. Roumie is an active member of his parish in Los Angeles where he is a lector, ministry leader, and extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. His role as Jesus is convincing and believable. Not only does he look like the face of Jesus from the Shroud of Turin, his acting ability, mannerisms, and affable nature allowed me to see both natures of Jesus, human and divine.

The series theology was also something I was concerned about as I didn't know how they would portray it. I have to say I was pleasantly surprised and I think they did a good job. Do they take some artistic license with the show and the lives of the disciples? Definitely. However, the theology is pretty sound. One thing I was really impressed with was how they portrayed Mary, Jesus' mother. (Mary and how Catholics view her versus Protestants can often be a sticking point between us.) One part that stuck out to me was the wedding of Cana scene. I was paying attention to how Jesus addressed Mary when she told him about the lack of wine. The show has Jesus saying, "Mother, my time has yet to come." Now I might be reading too much into this but for them to use the word "mother" instead of saying "woman" impressed me. Are they admitting that Mary is the Mother of God? Well, they do portray Jesus as God and they admit that Mary is his mother...so I will keep hoping.

As the show progressed it just kept getting better and better. The final episode ends with Jesus encountering the Samaritan woman at the well and with as many times as I have read that passage, I now see it in a totally different light. I think that was one of the unexpected results of this series, it gave me a unique and more realistic understanding of the Gospels. I watched all 8 episodes of the first season and it left me wanting more!

You can find it by Googling *The Chosen* and I also believe there is an app you can download to watch it for free. I went to YouTube and watched the 8 episodes there. If you are stuck at home like most of us and you want a refreshing take on the Christ story then do yourself a favor and watch *The Chosen*. I was glad I did!