

MISSION MESSAGE

Mission in the Movies: Just How Far will You Go for the Gospel?

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Every summer, my Goddaughter and I have a girls' weekend together. What started as a way to give the middle child some space away from her brothers has become an annual tradition we both cherish. Whether it's a trip to Knoebels, a day at the aquarium, or even a spa day at home, I always seem to end our time together with a grateful heart, and this year was no exception.

June's heat wave pushed us to stick to air-conditioned activities, so to the movies we went! The live-action version of the Disney classic, "Moana" was calling us... (IYKYK)! We settled in with our snacks, and somewhere in the middle of the movie, I found myself thinking that Moana would have been a great missionary.

For readers less familiar with the film, Moana is based on stories from Polynesian mythology and follows a teenage girl who sails beyond her people's protected waters to save her village from famine. Guided by her grandmother's memory and the reluctant help of a demigod named Maui, she navigates the dangers of the open ocean to fulfill the ancient quest of her ancestors.

Moana spends a good part of

the story not really understanding the pull she feels toward the ocean. She just knows it's there, and she has to decide whether to trust it or ignore it. I don't think that is very different from how a lot of people describe their own sense of calling, whether it's to religious life, to a ministry, or to some work they can't fully explain yet. The call usually shows up before the clarity does.

When Moana finally leaves her island, she doesn't go to conquer or to prove herself. She goes because her people are struggling, and she cannot stand by without doing something to help. That's mission in its truest sense! We don't evangelize to win arguments; we go out into the world because love compels us to take the Good News to people who are hurting.

What struck me the most was how much of Moana's journey depends on memory. She only finds the courage to move forward once she remembers who her people really are: voyagers, not just islanders who never sailed beyond the reef out of fear. Our faith works the same way. We are a missionary people by our baptism, called to carry the Gospel

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The Society for the Propagation of the Faith
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outward. Sometimes we need to be reminded of that identity before we can live it.

In the end, Moana finds what she is looking for and sets things right for her island and her people. She comes back a changed person, finally understanding where she comes from and where she is meant to go. What a fitting image to end on since going out on mission usually changes the one who goes just as much as it changes anything else.



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