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The Gospel According To St. Matthew

1964 136 min. B&W Rental: C

Directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini; original title: "Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo;" produced by Alfredo Bini; screenplay by Pasolini, based on the New Testament Book of Matthew; photography by Tonino delli Colli. With Enrique Irazoque, Margherite Caruso, Susanna Pasolini, Marcello Morante, Mario Socrate. Italian dialog with English subtitles.

Also available in English dubbed version; please specify version desired.

Pasolini's remarkable film, *The Gospel According To St. Matthew*, is a modern interpretation of the Evangelist's text and the most complex of the late director's works. Dedicated to the memory of Pope John XXIII, whose advent, according to Pasolini, created a climate which made the shooting of the film possible, *The Gospel* won general, and perhaps unexpected acclaim from the public, church groups, festivals (Special Jury Prize, Venice). All paid homage to the film's originality, humility, power. At the same time, *The Gospel According To St. Matthew* was the center of a controversy between Marxist and Christian historical and

critical perspectives.

The film was shot in Southern Italy, almost entirely in exteriors, in the countryside and hill towns that mark the arid landscapes of Calabria, Apulia and Lucania. Pasolini's objective was to tell the Gospel not by reconstruction but by analogy. The role of Christ is played by a Spanish student, Enrique Irazoque. Sometimes gentle, often harsh, Pasolini's Christ is an angry leader of a stubborn people. Other roles are played by non-professional actors as well, most from the agricultural and pastoral proletariat of Southern Italy, some from among Pasolini's friends—fellow intellectuals and artists. The director employs a variety of rather dramatic cinematic techniques: quasi-documentary (cinema-verite, hand-held camera); expressive close-ups (in the mold of Dreyer's *The Passion Of Joan Of Arc*); quotations from Italian painting (Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, Giotto). The mixture of visual styles is matched by that of musical styles

(Bach, Mozart, American spirituals, African masses). The effort "to synthesize art and popular culture, all profoundly part of the Christian tradition," is clearly central to the director's vision. (MJA)



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