



37th SEASON

ENGLISH FILM CLUB 2016/17

Massagno, Cinema Lux

18.15

Friday, 28 October 2016

Spotlight

2015

129 minutes

Directed by **Tom McCarthy**

Starring: Mark Ruffalo, Michael Keaton and Rachel McAdams

In 2001, *The Boston Globe* hires a new editor, Marty Baron. Baron meets Walter "Robby" Robinson, the editor of the Spotlight team, a small group of journalists writing investigative articles that take months to research and publish. After Baron reads a *Globe* column about a lawyer, Mitchell Garabedian, who says that Cardinal Bernard Law (the Archbishop of Boston) knew that the priest John Geoghan was sexually abusing children and did nothing to stop him, he urges the Spotlight team to investigate. Journalist Michael Rezendes contacts Garabedian, who initially declines to be interviewed. Though he is told not to, Rezendes reveals that he is on the Spotlight team, persuading Garabedian to talk.

Initially believing that they are following the story of one priest who was moved around several times, the Spotlight team begin to uncover a pattern of sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests in Massachusetts, and an ongoing cover-up by the Boston Archdiocese. Through Phil Saviano, who heads the victims' rights group Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), they widen their search to 13 priests. They learn through Richard Sipe, a former priest who worked at trying to rehabilitate pedophile priests, that statistically there should be approximately 90 abusive priests in Boston (six percent of priests). Through their research, they develop a list of 87 names, and begin to find their victims to back up their suspicions.

When the September 11 attacks occur, the team is forced to deprioritize the story. They regain momentum when Rezendes learns from Garabedian that there are publicly available documents that confirm Cardinal Law was made aware of the problem and ignored it.

Critics' comments:

- *So crammed are the details of the inquiry, and so delicately must the topic of abuse be handled, that a more intrepid visual manner might have thrown the movie off track, and one of its major virtues is what's not there: no creepy flashbacks of prowling priests, or — as in the prelude to Clint Eastwood's "Mystic River" — of children in the vortex of peril. Everything happens in the here and now, not least the recitation of the there and then. You sense the tide of the past rushing in most fiercely during some of the plainest scenes, as Globe staffers listen to victims like Joe and Patrick explain what they underwent decades before. They are grown men, but they are drowning souls. Boldest of all is the brief appearance of Richard O'Rourke as Ronald Paquin, a retired priest, who answers the door to Pfeiffer (Rachel McAdams) and answers her questions with the kindest of smiles. "Sure, I fooled around, but I never felt gratified myself," he says, as if arguing the finer points of doctrine.*

(from *The New Yorker*)

- *Both visually and verbally, Thomas McCarthy's film is almost obstinately unshowy. But much like "All The President's Men" — which is, of course, a significant and unavoidable influence — "Spotlight" finds a thrilling and absorbing anti-glamour in journalistic spadework. There's no tidy moral to take away here, which is, I think, entirely right: a story like this shouldn't end in comfort. Instead, it leaves your skin prickling — both at the despicable business of secret-keeping, and the courage and resourcefulness that rivetingly overturns it.* (from *The Daily Telegraph*)