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Subject of documentary to attend McAllen screening

Cine El Rey to show 'Hand of God'

By BRUCE LEE SMITH
Valley Morning Star

February 10, 2007 — Paul Cultrera, the subject of the controversial documentary "Hand of God" will attend a screening of the film on Feb. 18 at the Cine El Rey in McAllen.

"Hand of God" tells the story of Cultrera's sexual abuse at the hands of a parish priest in the Boston area, its long-term effects on his life and the efforts of the Roman Catholic Church to cover it all up.

"Hand of God" is directed by Paul's brother Joe Cultrera, who will also attend the screening. Both will be available for questions and discussion after the film.

The 4:30 p.m. screening is being offered at no charge by Call to Action Rio Grande Valley, the local branch of a nationwide organization seeking accountability — financial and otherwise — within the Catholic Church.

"This is a very personal story about Paul and what happened to him and the impact of that on the whole family," said CTARGV member Gerald Brazier. "To have the subject of the documentary be able to reflect on the experience with people face to face could be a very powerful experience for the audience."

"It gives an immediacy to the story that just watching the film wouldn't give you."

Brazier said only 450 seats are available in the downtown McAllen theater.

"Hand of God" aired nationally Jan. 16 as part of the PBS series Frontline. Controversy erupted when the local PBS affiliate KMBH refused to air it during Frontline's normal prime time slot.

Founded under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brownsville, KMBH has its board of directors and general manager appointed by Bishop Reymundo Peña.

Frontline had originally planned to air another documentary, "News War" on Jan. 16. When "News War" ran into production problems, "Hand of God" was chosen as a replacement.

Monsignor Pedro Briseño, president, CEO and general manager of KMBH, said the station was not informed in time to make the schedule change when the station's newsletter went to press in late December.

However, Frontline series manager Jim Bracciale confirmed Friday that stations were informed on Dec. 1 of the "Hand of God" schedule change.

After a Feb. 1 meeting of the KMBH board of directors, chairman Bill Elliott said those wishing to see "Hand of God" can call the station about receiving a free copy of the documentary.

In a Jan. 18 press release, the station said those requests are limited to current KMBH contributors and may take several weeks to fill.

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