

Hand of God makes Valley debut at Cine El Rey

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The PBS/Frontline documentary *Hand of God* will finally make its Rio Grande Valley debut, although not through its intended medium.

Instead of a television broadcast, the film will screen for free at Cine El Rey in McAllen, where the director and his brother, who also is the film's subject, will answer audience questions.

Born and raised in Salem, Massachusetts to a middle class Italian family, Paul Cultrera was sexually abused by a neighborhood priest when he was a teenager. Paul kept the abuse secret for several decades before finally telling his ex-wife and family. The film, directed and produced by Paul's brother Joe, follows the Cultrera family as they cope, as well as Paul's journey to find justice and expose cover-ups within the Catholic Church.

Both television and print news outlets have covered the Catholic Church abuse scandals that rocked New England in the early 2000s. *Hand of God*, however, contains no data or expert interviews, said Joe Cultrera. "I didn't want to do another news



Zingorplatz/Pictures

Hand of God, the disputed episode of Frontline that was prevented from airing on the local PBS station, is set to screen for free at Cine El Rey. The film, a scene from which is shown above, deals with alleged cover-ups of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church.

story," he said in a telephone interview. "There have been other films in similar styles, with news reports and clips from different news stations. I wanted to

focus on us. I wanted people to see our story as opposed to hearing statistics and analyses. It's just us living our lives, and what it felt like."

After its absence from programming at local Public Broadcasting System affiliate KMBH caused a local stir, the Catholic advocacy group Call To Action-Rio Grande Valley arranged the film's screening at Cine El Rey.

"The Valley is not an area that has any other venues besides PBS to air this kind of programming," said Dora Saavedra, secretary for CTA-RGV. "If PBS doesn't show something, all of the Valley loses. This documentary puts a human face and family on (the issue). I think (this film) is important for people from all over the Valley who care about the situation who want to prevent any further victims. It's important that people educate themselves."

Regardless of the local buzz surrounding *Hand of God*, the film still deserves to reach Valley audiences because of its overall message, said Cine El Rey owner Luis Muñoz.

"It's a good documentary that needs to be seen," he said. "It's a very important issue. It's not about Catholicism, it's about human abuse. It's not an indictment of faith, it's an indictment of human weakness."

Whereas the version Frontline aired

See **HAND OF GOD** page 19F

HAND OF GOD

continued from page 10F

on PBS was edited for time, the screening at Cine El Rey will use the film's original version, Cultrera said, restoring 12 minutes to the film's length. Afterward he and his brother

are at with all these issues. It's like my new church, in a way."

For more information about *Hand of God*, or to watch the documentary online, visit

www.handofgodfilm.com or
www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/handofgod.

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