

= Into Temptation (film) =

Into Temptation is a 2009 independent drama film written and directed by Patrick Coyle , and starring Jeremy Sisto , Kristin Chenoweth , Brian Baumgartner , Bruce A. Young and Amy Matthews . It tells the story of a prostitute (Chenoweth) who confesses to a Catholic priest (Sisto) that she plans to kill herself on her birthday . The priest attempts to find and save her , and in doing so plunges himself into a darker side of society .

The film was partially inspired by Coyle 's father , a kind but belligerent man who had considered becoming a priest in his early life . The script won the McKnight Screenwriting Fellowship from the IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts . Into Temptation was filmed and set in Coyle 's hometown of Minneapolis , Minnesota . Several supporting roles were filled with actors from the Minneapolis ? Saint Paul theater area , and Coyle himself performed in a supporting role .

It was produced by Ten Ten Films and Farnam Street II , and distributed by First Look International . With a budget of less than \$ 1 million , filming began in May 2008 . Cinematography was provided by David Doyle , Russell Holsapple composed the score , and Lee Percy worked as editor . The film touches on themes of temptation , sin , good and evil , redemption and celibacy , as well as the boundaries between a priest providing counsel and getting personally involved with helping parishioners .

Into Temptation was optioned in Hollywood , but talks fell through due to complications from the global recession . The film did not receive a national release but played at theaters in several cities . Although first publicly shown for Coyle 's father in December 2008 , Into Temptation officially premiered on April 26 , 2009 , at the Newport Beach Film Festival , where Sisto won the " Outstanding Achievement in Acting " award . The film received generally positive reviews . It was released on DVD on October 27 , 2009 .

= = Plot = =

Father John Buerlein (Jeremy Sisto) is the mild @-@ mannered Catholic priest of a small parish in Minneapolis , Minnesota . Overworked and underpaid , he has grown jaded with the profession and has trouble connecting with his parishioners . During confession , a mysterious and unnamed prostitute (Kristin Chenoweth) confesses to a sin she has not yet committed : she plans to commit suicide on her birthday . Father John is taken aback . The confession ends abruptly , and he is unable to stop the woman before she disappears . He only knows she wears a crucifix and is an Aries , which means her birthday is soon . Father John grows obsessed with finding and helping this woman , and begins visiting the city 's red @-@ light district with the hopes of finding her . On his way home , Father John meets a homeless man named Gus (Gene Larche) , but with no money for him , he gives him a rosary instead . Later , he seeks counsel from his friend Father Ralph O 'Brien (Brian Baumgartner) , who advises him not to become too personally involved .

Father John returns to the red @-@ light district and speaks to a prostitute named Miriam (Greta Oglesby) , who suggests a powerful pimp named James St. Clair (Ansa Akyea) might know about the woman . As they speak in a bar , the mysterious prostitute enters and solicits a john (Patrick Coyle) , who leaves with her immediately . As she goes , Father John catches a glimpse of the crucifix she is wearing and tries to chase her down . She leaves in the john 's car before he can catch them , but he writes down the license plate as they drive off . Back at church , his sermons start to grow more unorthodox , and Father Ralph warns him that his unusual church manner and trips to the red @-@ light district have the archbishop concerned . Meanwhile , Father John is contacted by his ex @-@ girlfriend Nadine Brennan (Amy Matthews) , who tells him she is divorcing her husband and still harbors romantic feelings for Father John .

Father John learns the john 's car belongs to an accountant named Steven Miller , who tells Father John the prostitute is Linda , an expensive call girl who is widely considered among the best at her profession . Meanwhile , Linda visits her dying , elderly stepfather Donald Dupree (Tom Carey) , who repeatedly raped Linda in her childhood and ultimately set her on the path to prostitution . Linda confronts him about their past , but claims she has forgiven him his sins , even though he continues

to deny any wrongdoing . A drunk Nadine goes to talk to Father John in confession about her loneliness and feelings for him . He admits to caring for her as well , but they agree to remain friends . Later , Father John hires Lloyd Montag (Bruce A. Young) , an unemployed boxer at his church , to serve as his bodyguard as he talks to St. Clair . The pimp , who knows Lloyd from his boxing days , tells Father John what neighborhood Linda lives in . There , Father John and Lloyd find Zeke (Tony Papenfuss) , a taxi driver who knows they are looking for Linda and agrees to take them to her apartment . Zeke explains he had driven her to the church when she first spoke to Father John at confession , and Zeke later visited the church to watch Father John preach .

At the apartment , Father John and Lloyd find Linda has moved out , but they discover she had possessed a 12 @-@ year @-@ old newspaper clipping about Father John 's ordination . Father John offers Lloyd a job helping out at the church , which Lloyd accepts . Father John then returns to his church and cries , fearing he is too late to save Linda . Meanwhile , Linda goes to a bridge and is about to jump off when she encounters Gus , who offers her the rosary he received earlier from Father John . A grateful and emotional Linda hugs Gus . It is not revealed whether she commits suicide or not . In a confession to Father Ralph , Father John expresses guilt he did not absolve Linda before her confession abruptly ended . Father Ralph says that even if Linda is dead , her soul is immortal , and that Father John 's penance is to absolve her now . Father John does so . The film ends with a childhood memory of young Linda at church , where a group of boys laugh at her old torn clothes until she is defended by a young John Buerlein , whose act seems to make a strong positive impact upon her .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

Into Temptation marks the second film by independent filmmaker Patrick Coyle , who wrote and directed the 2003 drama film Detective Fiction . Coyle said Into Temptation was partially inspired by his father , James Patrick Coyle , a kind but belligerent man who had been encouraged by his mother to become a priest . James entered seminary but dropped out before ordination after he was drafted into serving overseas in World War II and met Margaret Mary Quinlan , who would become his wife and Patrick Coyle 's mother . Coyle conceived of the script for Into Temptation while imagining what kind of priest his father would have been . His father strongly approved of the project , and told Coyle , " Go make that movie . And tell the truth . " Coyle was also partially inspired by his childhood pastor and friend , the Reverend Damian Zuerlein , who performed the marriage ceremony for Coyle and his wife and baptized their children . Coyle said of him , " He 's just a young , energetic , competent , committed , devoted man working with a poor parish . And he loves his work . I was inspired by that . " Coyle said when writing Into Temptation , he did not intend to make a religious film , and said of protagonist Father John Buerlein , " The character could have been a minister or a rabbi or a public defender . He 's a good man trying to do a job the best he can . "

Ann Luster , the film 's producer , helped with the script from the earliest stages , and claimed she and Coyle had a deep understanding of how to handle the characters from the start . The film was set in Minneapolis , Minnesota , where Coyle lived and worked as a writer and actor at the time . The fictional church in the story , St. Mary Magdalen 's Downtown Catholic Church , is based in part on the St. Mary Magdalene church in Omaha , Nebraska , where Coyle was raised . However , the real @-@ life church was also very different from the fictional church in that it lacked a shelter and drew very large congregations for weekend mass , compared to the half @-@ empty pews in the fictional church . The fictional church is also based in part on Our Lady of Guadalupe , another Catholic church in south Omaha . The Into Temptation script won the McKnight Screenwriting Fellowship from IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts , and investors were sought through public readings . After reading the script , Patrick Coyle 's wife said , " If you get a good Father John , you 'll have a good movie . "

== = Casting = = =

Jeremy Sisto said he was drawn to the script , and was excited to take on a different project than his regular role of Detective Cyrus Lupo on the NBC crime drama series Law & Order . Sisto said of working on the show , " For nine months we basically do the same episode over and over . This [Into Temptation script] came out of nowhere . " Sisto said of working on Into Temptation : " Having just come off a job where there is little room to find true moments and to create a full character , I felt this respite from the task of trying to force a space where I could express something more personal through my job was no less than a creative life saver . "

Coyle cold called Kristin Chenoweth 's agent and proposed the part , which is different from her usual roles , and her agent said it was the exact part the actress was seeking . In order to film Into Temptation , Chenoweth took a five @-@ day hiatus from her supporting role on the ABC television series Pushing Daisies . Brian Baumgartner , best known for his supporting role as Kevin Malone in the NBC comedy series The Office , was a regular theater performer in the Minneapolis ? Saint Paul area before joining that show . While visiting New York City in May 2008 for an upfront presentation , shortly after having finished filming the fourth season of The Office , Baumgartner was offered the Into Temptation script by Coyle , who asked him to consider taking the role of Father Ralph O 'Brien . Baumgartner said he enjoyed the script and agreed to the part .

Writer and director Patrick Coyle plays Steven Miller , one of Linda 's clients . Many of the other minor roles were filled by local Minneapolis actors and community members . Greta Oglesby , who played the street @-@ smart prostitute Miriam , and Isabell Monk O ? Connor , who played a librarian who helps Father John , were both veterans of the Minneapolis ? Saint Paul theater circuit . Ansa Akyea , who played pimp James St. Clair , and Amy Matthews , who played Father John 's ex @-@ girlfriend , were also from the Minneapolis ? Saint Paul area .

== = Filming = = =

Into Temptation was produced by Coyle 's production company , Ten Ten Films , and the company Farnam Street II , in association with Cabin 14 Productions . It was distributed by First Look International . About a year before the film was released , Coyle asked Anne Marie Gillen to serve as executive producer . Gillen said she had not responded to a script in such an emotional way since the 1991 drama film Fried Green Tomatoes , which she also produced . Filming , which began in May 2008 , took place entirely in Minneapolis . It included several scenes staged in the city 's Uptown commercial district , where Coyle lived .

In addition to his personal connections to the city , Coyle said filming took place in Minneapolis because it was relatively inexpensive to shoot there and hire local actors . He said , " Shooting in Uptown is a filmmaker 's paradise . You 've got everything here . " Into Temptation was produced and shot on a very low budget of less than \$ 1 million . Cinematography was provided by David Doyle , who made extensive use of the Red Digital Cinema Camera . The church scenes were filmed at the Incarnation Church in the city . Sisto and Chenoweth both attended mass services at the church as part of their research for the roles . Exterior car scenes were shot in the Uptown district . During one scene in particular , a police car with a siren passed by the actors during a shot . The actors continued uninterrupted , and the final shot was used in the film .

Coyle approached Russell Holsapple , a Minneapolis ? Saint Paul native and relatively inexperienced composer , to create the score for Into Temptation . Holsapple was given only a few weeks to create the score , which was composed mostly of piano music . Holsapple said Coyle gave him a great deal of artistic freedom and was largely receptive to the themes he wrote . James R. Bakkom worked as production designer on the film , and Deborah Fiscus served as costume designer . Both are natives of the Minneapolis ? Saint Paul area . Vanessa Miles was set decorator , while Sarah Jean Kruchowski and Amy Hubbard both worked as art directors .

Lee Percy served as editor of the film . He said the final cuts provided to him already contained the actors ' strongest performances , but that he placed a greater focus on Father John 's character in an effort to " help the audience get inside him and connect emotionally " . Percy was assisted by

editor Scott Ferril . Patrick Coyle 's father , Jim , followed production of the film closely , making weekly calls to inquire about it . When his father 's health started to decline , Patrick Coyle " worked like hell " to finish the film quickly so his father could see it before he died . The film was finished in December 2008 .

= = Release = =

= = = Distribution = = =

Into Temptation was optioned in Hollywood , but Coyle was displeased when industry officials wanted him to change the ending and make the sex scenes more risqué . Due to complications from the financial crisis of 2007 ? 2010 , the Hollywood discussions eventually collapsed . It did not receive a national release , but played at theaters in New York City , Los Angeles , Fargo , North Dakota , and several cities throughout Minnesota , including Minneapolis and Duluth . Coyle first publicly showed the film on December 26 , 2008 , at the Omaha hospice where his father Jim was staying for an audience of about 15 people . Jim Coyle , who died a few weeks after the screening , loved the film , describing it as very powerful and truthful . It officially premiered on April 26 , 2009 , at the Newport Beach Film Festival in Newport Beach , California .

During its opening weekend at the Lagoon Cinema in Minneapolis , Into Temptation sold more tickets in three days than any other film during its debut weekend , and sold twice the tickets of such major studio films as Taking Woodstock and Quentin Tarantino 's Inglourious Basterds . This resulted in an extended run and strong word @-@ of @-@ mouth that led to exhibitions in other cities . The film earned a total of \$ 97 @,@ 457 in gross revenue in the United States . The Into Temptation DVD was released on October 27 , 2009 , with no bonus features .

= = = Critical response = = =

Into Temptation received generally positive reviews . Variety magazine writer Rob Nelson called it a well @-@ photographed film of " occasionally irreverent wit " , and that Coyle " strikes a near @-@ perfect balance between humor and holiness " . Nelson said the film " falters only in its hokey characterization " of the Chenoweth character . Colin Covert of the Star Tribune called it a " haunting , carefully crafted movie " with simple " matter @-@ of @-@ fact " direction , a " trim and efficient " screenplay , strong acting and solid characters . Covert said , " This is one of very few American films to deal with religious beliefs about faith and salvation with empathy and insight . " OC Weekly writer Matt Coker said Into Temptation had a cohesive script which " strikes just the right cord of reverence for the Catholic faith " . He also praised the moments of comic relief with Sisto and Baumgartner , which he said complimented some of the film 's heavier moments . L. Kent Wolgamott of the Lincoln Journal Star called Into Temptation a well @-@ made film that " gets the mood right from start to finish " . He complimented the performances and said although pornography and prostitution were familiar film topics , " the film 's nuanced understanding of the priest and his conflicted role in trying to save Linda adds a new element to the old story . "

Bob Fischbach of the Omaha World @-@ Herald called the cinematography sharp , the editing crisp , and the acting " uniformly good " . He added , " Best of all , the writing is anchored in reality . Coyle lets his film show rather than tell , and lets viewers reach their own conclusions . " Lavender magazine writer John Townsend said the film conveyed compassionate views of Christianity and complimented the cinematography . Townsend particularly praised Baumgartner 's performance and described the scenes between Sisto and a young boy troubled by his homosexual feelings (John Skelley) as " exquisite " . Chelsa Doyle , a writer with the website Blogcritics , called it " a touching and introspective film about faith , hope and choice " . Doyle praised the film 's quiet tone and the performances of Sisto and Chenoweth , but said it " occasionally gets a little sleepy in the middle " , and that the subplot involving Father John 's ex @-@ girlfriend could have been cut altogether . Denver Post film critic Lisa Kennedy praised the performances of Sisto and Chenoweth , and

complimented Coyle 's understanding of the pastoral work of a parish priest . However , she added that the film " doesn 't break ground as a story , even one about redemption " . Andrea Gronvall of the Chicago Reader called it a " cheesy melodrama " , and wrote , " Writer @-@ director Patrick Coyle tackles such weighty issues as child abuse , alcoholism , hypocrisy , celibacy , and Catholic reforms , but the movie 's spiritual agenda is belied by its voyeurism . "

Jeremy Sisto was awarded " Outstanding Achievement in Acting " from the 2009 Newport Beach Film Festival awards .

= = Themes = =

Throughout the film , Father John is warned that his role as a priest comes with boundaries , and that he should not become personally involved with the congregants or try to solve their problems except through counseling . However , Father John begins to question those boundaries and reconsider whether the role as priest goes far enough in having a positive , substantive impact on the lives of those in his care , particularly Linda . And , in addition to questioning whether he is helping his congregants , Father John questions whether staying within those boundaries is enough to personally fulfill himself as a priest and provide his own life with meaning . He ultimately crosses over those boundaries and gets personally involved in trying to help Linda by delving into the city 's red @-@ light district to seek her .

The film takes a modern , liberal approach to the rules and constraints of Catholicism . Even before Father John decides to help Linda , he is questioning the constraints of his religion and calling . While speaking to a prospective mother struggling over whether to raise her daughter within the strict confines of Catholicism , Father John gives her advice beyond the official dogma and encourages her to be flexible , telling her she should " take what works " from the church teachings . Father John also has an unorthodox view of homosexuality compared to the normal views of the church . This is demonstrated in a scene in which the priest comforts a young man who is struggling with his homosexual feelings . In meeting and interacting with the pimps and prostitutes of the red @-@ light district , Into Temptation blurs the lines between good and evil , and between right and wrong . The negative responses Father John encounters from congregants and the church regarding his trips to the red @-@ light district demonstrate the way sex and poverty are often stigmatized in society .

As the title suggests , one of the major themes of the film involves the temptations Father John faces to sin and stray from his priestly calling . This is perhaps most strongly manifested in his apparent ambivalence regarding the vow of celibacy required of Catholic priests . As Father John goes deeper into the red @-@ light district and the seedier aspects of Minneapolis , he appears to face temptations from the prostitution and overt sexuality surrounding him . Additionally , it can be interpreted that his interest in Linda is one of physical attraction , as well as a desire to help her . This is further manifested through the sudden reappearance of his former girlfriend , for whom Father John admits to still harboring romantic feelings . The priest demonstrates conflicting emotions when it comes to maintaining his priestly vows and his relationship with Nadine .

Into Temptation is also a story of redemption , both for Linda , who is seeking redemption for a life of sin and prostitution , and for Father John , who is seeking redemption for his failure to help Linda and his own doubts about religion and priesthood . At the start of the film , Father John appears to be questioning his duty to the church and its dwindling congregation ; this is especially demonstrated when he appears bored during confession and does crossword puzzles to pass the time . Such struggles are not uncommon in priesthood . But after he resists the church boundaries and attempts to help Linda , his faith in the congregation and belief in the profession are restored , and he returns to the church a stronger and more content priest . The film demonstrates the power of compassion and individual kindness , particularly in the way that John 's simple act of defending Linda during her childhood was such a profound moment in her life . The film also advocates repentance , and the extent of Linda 's victimization can be interpreted as a sign of how catastrophic an unrepentant life can be .