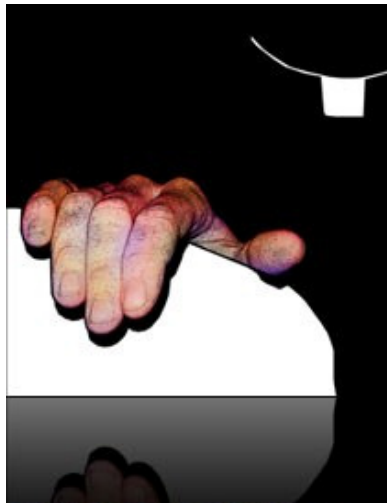


Doubt: A Parable

by

John Patrick Shanley



Study Guide Compiled by K. Georgia Geverding



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Patrick Shanley was born on the 3rd of October, 1950, and was raised in the Bronx by a working class Irish family. The youngest of five children of an immigrant meat-packer father and a first generation Irish American mother who worked as a telephone operator, Shanley's experiences in his working Irish-Italian neighbourhood underlined his status as an outsider in what he has called an 'anti-intellectual and extremely racist' neighbourhood. While still in elementary school, he was writing poetry and winning state recognition for his essay writing. After an unsuccessful year at New York University, he joined the Marines, but following his stateside tour of duty, returned to NYU to earn a degree in Educational Theatre. He graduated in 1977 as valedictorian of his class.

While working many blue-collar jobs to support himself, he began writing plays which were produced off Broadway, and in 1984, earned some early buzz with 'Danny and the Deep Blue Sea', a comedic drama about a pair of hopeless barflies. In 1987 he made a bigger name for himself, winning a screen writing Oscar for the film "Moonstruck" and later that year, writing the Independent Spirit Award nominee "Five Corners" starring Jodie Foster as a young woman pursued again by a former stalker after his release from jail.

Another thriller screenplay, "The January Man", followed with less success. In 1990, Shanley followed up by directing "Joe Versus The Volcano" which failed to find its audience and was only a moderate success at the box office. In addition to these Hollywood experiences, Shanley remained active in the New York theatre scene, earning great reviews for a number of plays, including "Beggars In The House of Plenty" which tells the perhaps autobiographical story of a dysfunctional Bronx family whose son escapes through writing. In 1993, he adapted the Piers Paul Reid book "Alive" and wrote the compelling screen play for the film which told the story of the Andes survivors. Two years later, he adapted Michael Crichton's novel 'Congo', writing the screenplay for what became a very successful film.

In 2002, after a number of successes on stage, Shanley crossed into television, collaborating on the Emmy-nominated screenplay for the HBO production of "Live From Baghdad", a fact-based movie about an American news team in Iraq during the Persian Gulf war.

In 2004, "Doubt: A Parable" appeared on Broadway, earning the playwright nearly every accolade awarded in the theatre, including a Tony Award for Best Play, a Drama Desk Award, an Obie, and a Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Shanley later adapted his own work for the screen, earning a Golden Globe nomination for his screenplay for the film starring Meryl Streep as Sister Aloysius and Philip Seymour Hoffman as the charismatic young priest whom she suspects of improper conduct.

BEFORE THE PLAY – A SYNOPSIS

(adapted from Martin Andrucki as edited in the PCS study guide for 'Doubt')

'Doubt' examines its themes in nine scenes involving four characters – scenes that build inexorably to the dramatic final lines that echo the play's central idea of doubt itself.

The first scene opens in the church during the homily of Sunday mass. Father Flynn, a young priest new to the parish; is delivering a sermon on the subject of doubt itself – as he says, “a bond as powerful and sustaining as certainty.”

This is followed by scene 2 in the office of the principal of St. Nicholas school, Sister Aloysius Beauvier, who is receiving a visit from the much younger Sister James, who teaches grade eight and is worried about a student who has had a bleeding nose. The exchange between the two nuns makes us very aware of their contrasting views of the world.

Scene 3 re-introduces Father Flynn, this time in the gym in his role as basketball coach, offering advice to his team. It ends with him inviting the boys to the rectory for “Kool-Aid, cookies, and a bull session” – an invitation later open to new or re-interpretation.

Scene 4 returns us to the garden and a second conversation between the two nuns in which a student named Donald Muller is first mentioned. Though never actually seen, Donald is an important character about whom Sister Aloysius worries, even more so when she is assured by Sister James that he has “a protector... Father Flynn.” Immediately alert, the older nun presses the younger one for specific information, information which leads her to suspect an inappropriate relationship. Uncertain how to best proceed, she plans to meet with the priest in the presence of the younger nun.

Back in the principal's office for that meeting, called on the pretext of discussing the annual Christmas Pageant, the conversation in scene 5 turns to Donald, the older nun making clear to the priest that she suspects him of improper sexual behaviour. Angry, he denies it, explaining that his behaviour was inspired by a desire to give Donald a second chance after the boy's infraction of drinking the communion wine. Unbowed, Sister Aloysius vows “to bring him down.”

Scene 6 returns to the church and Father Flynn's second sermon, on the destructive power of gossip – a sermon clearly linked to his experience in the principal's office and very likely directed at Sister Aloysius as well as the congregation of St. Nicholas.

Scene 7 returns to the garden and a conversation between the priest and Sister James. This is a bookend to scene 2 where Sister Aloysius has reprimanded the

young nun for her empathetic instincts and her tendency to listen to her heart rather than her head. In scene 7, Father Flynn makes the opposing argument.

“There are people who go after your humanity ... who tell you the light in your heart is a weakness. That your soft feelings betray you... It’s an old tactic of cruel people to kill kindness in the name of virtue. Don’t believe it. There’s nothing wrong with love.”

In this speech, he both attacks the repression of Sister Aloysius and defends his behaviour toward Donald, an isolated boy who is unarguably in need of a friend. It seems to the priest it is only the older nun’s cruelty that makes her see what he perceives as charity and kindness as something perverse and perverted.

Sister James admits that the principal had indeed robbed her of the joy of teaching, and the priest awkwardly consoles her. The scene ends with Sister James asserting her belief in the priest’s innocence, a vote of confidence that he says gives him great relief.

Scene 8 provides a complication, Donald’s mother comes to meet with the school principal, who intends to warn Mrs. Muller of her suspicions about the relationship between Father Flynn and her son. But the nun gets an unexpected response from the boy’s mother. Rather than shock, she professes gratitude;

“One man is good to him. This priest. Puts out a hand to the boy. Does the man have his reasons? Yes. Everybody has their reasons... But do I ask the man why he’s good to my son? No. I don’t care why. My son needs some man to care about him and see him through to Where he wants to go.”

She reveals that Donald is ‘...that way’ (gay) and that his own father beats him. Against the nun’s sense of moral outrage, the playwright juxtaposes Mrs. Muller’s moral relativism, her understanding that “Sometimes things aren’t black and white.’

Their interview ends and an enraged Father Flynn enters and demands an end to the ‘campaign’ against him. However, armed with her ‘certainty’, Sister Aloysius is clearly determined to rid her school of this priest. The priest protests that she has not ‘the slightest proof of anything’ – but that is irrelevant in the face of the nun’s vow that he “will be exposed’. The scene ends with the priest, left alone, calling the bishop to make an appointment.

Scene 9, the final scene shows us the consequences. Father Flynn is gone to another parish, a promotion. Sister James tells Sister Aloysius that she believes in his innocence and is shocked when the older nun admits she never did prove her suspicions, that a lie led to the transfer of the priest. But her lie has cost her: as the play ends, she admits in anguish, that she has “doubts ... such doubts.”

ABOUT THE PLAY

Written in the wake of the sex-abuse scandals of the Catholic church and in the era of the suspect rationalization of the second Iraq war, the play is an examination of morality and of the slippery nature of truth and our necessary defence of our own version of it. Shanley makes clear the idea that what we believe has consequences – for us and for others.

John Patrick Shanley titles his play “Doubt: A Parable” so we must examine the meaning of parable. By general definition, a parable is a short story, often biblical, which is used to express a lesson or a theme. What then is the story of “Doubt” trying to teach us?

At its core is a question: What do you do when you are not sure? The play examines this question in the context of a 1960's era Catholic school in the Bronx where the principal, a nun who believes in discipline and structure, confronts a younger priest whom she suspects of inappropriate behaviour with a student. But with a deliberately open-ended debate on this central moral issue – and a non-conclusion about the priest's guilt or innocence - the play presents a much larger intellectual challenge. At its centre is the idea of doubt and its opposite of certainty. Can we rightly view the world in black and white – or does the complex nature of moral debate require that we see the world in shades of gray?

It is instructive that Shanley was in part inspired by the lead up to the American intervention in Iraq, by a president and a vice-president who seemingly were willing to base their call to war on the unproved supposition that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and that such weapons posed a direct threat to American security. Without verifiable proof and with apparent certainty, these leaders convinced their citizens and their allies that they were right and the cause of war justified. When no weapons were ultimately found, another justification was given and few questioned the shift of rationale.

But the question remains: Who was hurt by the falsehood? Was it the people who told the falsehood? Or those who believed them? What price was paid by the American and Allied soldiers and Iraqi civilians? What price was paid by those who were reluctantly coerced to ‘go along’ with the majority opinion, though they themselves doubted its validity?

Shanley makes it clear that there are huge gray areas in any complex debate, and little that can easily be summarized in black and white. Each person in the play sooner or later harbours doubt ...

Sister Aloysius is a smart woman who both resents and relies on the strict hierarchy of the patriarchal church which will never make her, as a nun, equal to the priests who are her superiors. Questioning authority in the male-dominated

world of the church, she is trapped in a hierarchy which both frustrates and serves her. A member of the order of the Sisters of Charity, she is locked in the traditions of a church which is itself trying to thrust itself into a more modern form. The play is set in 1964, the year of Vatican II, and the modernization of the Catholic church in a world moving much faster than Sister Aloysius. Her antipathy to the ball point pen is symbolic of her resistance to the new as she clings to the formal and familiar comfort of a fountain pen.

Father Flynn, twenty years her junior, is a charismatic priest who is part of the modern church, relating to his students in the more casual arena of the gym floor and approaching them through friendship rather than the fear which Sister Aloysius believes in. It is that proffering of friendship to an isolated twelve year old student named Donald Muller, the only black student at St. Nicholas School, that alerts the older nun to the possibility that something improper may exist between the priest and the boy. She seeks out the young Sister James, Donald's teacher, to gather hearsay evidence against the priest and bolster her intuitive certainty that something is wrong.

Torn between her empathy for Donald and his need for the friendship Father Flynn can offer, and her sense of duty and subordination to the older nun, Sister James becomes the pawn of both and must eventually make her own personal decision regarding Father Flynn's guilt or innocence. In the end, it is she who bears witness to the corrosive power of doubt.

In the play, the issue of relative right and wrong becomes even more muddled when we realize that the young Donald is not only isolated from his peers by the colour of his skin, but by something else: he is gay, and thus the object of his father's wrath. In one of the most searing scenes in the play, his mother, summoned to see the principal so that she might tell Mrs. Muller of her concerns, begs Sister Aloysius to see the larger picture. Donald might be in some danger at the school but he will be in infinitely more danger if left to the anger of his own father.

So again we are left with the question of consequences: Who is hurt most? In the evolution of accusations of the play, Donald is devastated by both the loss of his place as an altar boy and the loss of the only adult who has befriended him. Father Flynn is removed from a place he wants to be, and though promoted, will be forever marked by the judgement of his accuser. And that accuser herself is haunted in the end by doubt, and still powerless to keep unchanged the church she knows.

Many playgoers might be tempted to see the play only as a question of Father Flynn's guilt: Did he do it? Or did he not? But the play is about much more and raises complicated questions. How are we to view Father Flynn? What has been behind his frequent moves? Could he be guilty in thought but not necessarily in deed. Can such a distinction be made in a church where thought may be

equivalent to sin? What if he is innocent – and a victim of persecution for the very empathy he exhibits to the young people in his charge? What in fact happened in the sacristy – if anything – and how does another’s interpretation of that change everything?

Out of these questions is born the agony of the last line of the play – Sister Aloysius’ anguished admission of doubt ... too late to change anything. If her initial suspicions were right, then what is she doubting? If she was wrong, what now does she doubt?

How do we tell this story of doubt? Is its lesson that not being sure is a good thing? Is doubt, as John Patrick Shanley puts it, the “age-old practice of the wise?”

THE SERMONS IN ‘DOUBT’

The sermons given in the play are instructive in looking for meaning.

The first opens the play with the question posed by Father Flynn: “What do you do when you’re not sure? ... When you look for God’s direction and can’t find it?” The sermon speaks of secrets, of uncertainty and isolation (as Donald will be isolated) and speaks of the crisis of faith that one can experience. It concludes with the statement that doubt can be a bond as powerful and sustaining as certainty.

We wonder: To whom is this sermon addressed? What light might it shed on the man that Father Flynn is? On the choice that Sister Aloysius will make?

The second sermon opens scene VI, following the confrontation between Sister Aloysius and Father Flynn in the preceding scene. This sermon is seemingly aimed at the nun – and by extension, at all those who would spread gossip and innuendo with the power to destroy. It asks “Is gossiping a sin?” and uses a story to illustrate its destructiveness. A woman who has gossiped is told to go home and take a feather pillow up to the roof and tear it open with a knife. Later, asked by her confessor what the result was, the woman replies, “Feathers ... feathers everywhere, Father.” Told to go back and gather every one of them up, the woman protests that “it can’t be done. The wind took them all over the place.” “And that,” concludes the old confessor, “is GOSSIP!”

This second sermon is a function of Father Flynn’s anger and his indictment of the actions of Sister Aloysius. The woman in the story asks if the hand of God Himself is pointing a finger at her, and asks the old priest, “Should I be asking your absolution? Father, tell me, have I done something wrong?” Is it this that feeds Sister Aloysius’ eventual moment of doubt? Words, once unleashed, can neither be recovered nor contained.

A PREFACE TO THE PLAY by John Patrick Shanley

In his own preface to the play, Shanley offers the following thoughts on the virtues of doubt...

What's under a play? What holds it up? You might as well ask what's under me? On what am I built? There's something silent under every person and every play. There is something unsaid under any given society as well.

There's a symptom apparent in America right now. It's evident in political talk shows, in entertainment coverage, in artistic criticism of every kind, in religious discussion. We are living in a courtroom culture... a culture of extreme advocacy, of confrontation, of judgement and of verdict. Discussion has given way to debate. Communication has become a contest of wills. Public talking has become obnoxious and insincere. Why? Maybe it's because deep down under the chatter, we have come to a place that we know that we don't know ... anything. But nobody's willing to say that.

Let me ask you. Have you ever held a position in an argument past the point of comfort? Have you ever defended a way of life you were on the verge of exhausting? Have you ever given service to a creed you no longer utterly believed? Have you ever told a girl you loved her and felt the faint nausea of eroding conviction? I have. That's an interesting moment. For a playwright, it's the beginning of an idea. I saw a piece of real estate on which I might build a play, a play that sat upon something silent in my life and in my time. I started with a title: Doubt.

What is Doubt? Each of us is like a planet. There's the crust, which seems eternal. We are confident about who we are. If you ask, we can readily describe our current state. I know my answers to so many questions, as do you. What was your father like? Do you believe in God? Who's your best friend? What do you want? Your answers are your current topography, seemingly permanent, but deceptively so. Because under that face of easy response, there is another You. And this wordless Being moves just as the instant moves; it presses upward without explanation, fluid and wordless, until the resisting consciousness has no choice but to give up.

It is Doubt (so often experienced initially as weakness) that changes things. When a man feels unsteady, when he falters, when hard-won knowledge evaporates before his eyes, he's on the verge of growth. The subtle or violent reconciliation of the outer person and the inner core often seems at first like a mistake, like you've gone the wrong way and you're lost. But this is just emotion longing for the familiar. Life happens when the tectonic power of your speechless

soul breaks through the dead habits of the mind. Doubt is nothing less than the opportunity to re-enter the Present.

The play. I've set my story in 1964, when not just me, but the whole world, seemed to be going through some kind of vast puberty. The old ways were still dominant in behaviour, dress, morality, world view, but what had been organic expression had become a dead mask. I was in a Catholic church school in the Bronx, run by the Sisters of Charity. These women dressed in black, believed in Hell, obeyed their male counterparts, and educated us. The faith, which held us together, went beyond the precincts of religion. It was a shared dream we agreed to call Reality. We didn't know it, but we had a deal, a social contract. We would all believe the same thing. We would all believe.

Looking back, it seems to me, in those schools at that time, we were an ageless unity. We were all adults and we were all children. We had, like many animals, flocked together for warmth and safety. As a result, we were terribly vulnerable to anyone who chose to hunt us. When trust is the order of the day, predators are free to plunder. And plunder they did. As the ever widening church scandals reveal, the predators had a field day. And the shepherds, so invested in the surface, sacrificed actual good for perceived virtue.

I have never forgotten the lessons of that era, nor learned them well enough. I still long for a shared certainty, an assumption of safety, the reassurance of believing that others know better than me what's for the best. But I have been led by the bitter necessities of an interesting life to value that age-old practice of the wise: Doubt.

There is an uneasy time when belief has begun to slip, but hypocrisy has yet to take hold, when the consciousness is disturbed but not yet altered. It is the most dangerous, important, and ongoing experience of life. The beginning of change is the moment of Doubt. It is that crucial moment when I renew my humanity or become a lie.

Doubt requires more courage than conviction does, and more energy; because conviction is a resting place and doubt is infinite – it is a passionate exercise. You may come out of my play uncertain. You may want to be sure. Look down on that feeling. We've got to learn to live with a full measure of uncertainty. There is no last word. That's the silence under the chatter of our time.

John Patrick Shanley
Brooklyn, New York
March, 2005

THE STC PRODUCTION – directed by David Savoy

THE SET DESIGN

Stage designer Geoffrey Dinwiddie has imaginatively created the world of the play. The action is set in St. Nicholas, a Catholic church and school in the Bronx, New York, in 1964 – a cultural milieu that informs the entire play. It is ‘parochial’ in both senses of the word, that is, operated under the auspices of the Catholic church and also narrowly restricted to that world – a little self-contained world within the vast institution of the church. The world of “Doubt” seems cloistered somehow, cut off from the immense city that surrounds it. The action of the play occurs in a series of confined spaces within the boundaries of the parish: the church, the walled garden, Sister Aloysius’ spare office. These spaces have been effectively created by the designer to convey the separateness of the setting from the vast city that surrounds it, while still revealing hints of that outside world through the sounds filtering through and the removal of one wall. This allows the audience to recognize the clash between the two worlds, the outside one changing much more rapidly than the world of the church.

The set is both grand and flexible, allowing for the change of scenes in a play with no intermission. The cloister with the garden area in the forefront is suggested by great pillars, a statue of the Virgin Mary, and a garden bench. The wall at stage right can pivot to reveal the pulpit where Father Flynn will deliver his sermons. The back wall will pivot to suggest the locker room where Father Flynn will coach the boys. Note the lockers, the change in the door, and the team signs – all of which help create the gymnasium ambience. And finally, we will see Sister Aloysius’ office - testimony to the spare, ordered world in which she is comfortable.

This is a strong sturdy-looking world – and yet it literally moves – as the world outside is moving and the world of the church is slowly evolving from an aloof institution to a church more accessible to the people,

NOTE: Music will also be used to help delineate the two worlds: music of the 60’s era to reflect Father Flynn’s more modern outlook and liturgical music to reflect the world of the traditional church.

COSTUMES

As nuns in the order of the Sisters of Charity, both Sister Aloysius and Sister James wear the bonneted habit of their particular order.

Father Flynn wears a series of costumes, ranging from the ceremonial vestments of the mass, to a suit with a clerical collar, to black cassock, and gym apparel.

Mrs. Muller, summoned to see the principal about her son’s progress, wears her ‘Sunday best’ – testimony to the authority of the church and its power in her son’s life and future.

THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

By all measures, the mid-sixties were a time of turmoil and change and the rise of youth culture. Some statistics make clear the difference between that time and our own:

In 1964,

- a new house cost 13,000 dollars
- the average income was 6000 dollars
- gas cost 30 cents a gallon
- a new car could be bought for 3500 dollars
- an apartment cost 150 dollars a month to rent
- and a movie ticket cost a dollar.

It was a huge time of change:

- the United States Congress had authorized the war in Vietnam, formalizing that conflict as war
- President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated in November of 1963, and former Vice-President Lyndon Johnson was the new President
- he declared the War on Poverty, promised social justice, and would sign the Civil Rights Act during his tenure in office
- student unrest and the beginnings of the anti-war protests were evident
- race riots were taking place in Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York City's Harlem
- racial unrest was starting to spill over from Southern states to the north
- the previous year, Martin Luther King had delivered his "I Have A Dream" speech in front of the Lincoln memorial
- King was awarded the Nobel Prize
- Sidney Poitier was the first black actor to be awarded an Oscar
- It was a time of foment, unrest, and rapid modernization.

Culturally,

- "Hello, Dolly" and "Fiddler On The Roof" debuted on Broadway
- the Rolling Stones released their first album
- the Beatles made their first appearance on the Ed Sullivan show
- Bob Dylan released 'The Times They Are A-changing'
- the first GI Joe action figures were manufactured
- the first touch-tone phone came on the market
- bubble wrap was introduced
- and the first computer mouse appeared

Most important to the world of Shanley's youth and to his play, however, was the evolution of the Catholic church precipitated by the **Second Ecumenical Council – Vatican II** - which tried to re-evaluate the way that Catholics worshipped in the church. In an attempt to modernize the church and make it more accessible to the people, many changes occurred. The liturgy of the mass, formerly universally celebrated in Latin, changed to the vernacular of the people in the country where mass was said, the priest now faced the people rather than the altar, the communion rail was removed, nuns' habits were modernized and more of them were more fully involved in their larger communities try to stem the falling off of vocations in both the priesthood and the convents.

The characters in 'Doubt' line up on either side of the line separating these two worlds. On the pre-council side is Sister Aloysius, in her sternness, her sense of duty, her philosophy of fear as the most effective tool in teaching, her certain virtue and her tendency to black and white interpretation. On the post-council side is Father Flynn, with his sense of familiarity with the boys he interacts with, and his permissive second chances. Sister James stands between the two, intuitively drawn to Father Flynn's side, but held in check by the authority of Sister Aloysius.

The church is changing, but not nearly as rapidly as the world is changing, and thus Father Flynn still has a position of power, and is surrounded by the protective shell of both the church hierarchy wherein a priest is superior to a nun, and the patriarchy which still holds a priest as somewhat separate from the world, still accorded prestige and the protection of the bishops above him. Given this, the charges levelled by Sister Aloysius seem initially questionable, a product more of her own rigidity and repression than of the priest's behaviour.

Yet, at the time of the writing of the play in 2004, the Catholic church was reeling from a series of scandals involving inappropriate actions of priests against young boys in their care. Sexual scandals were in the public mind and would certainly colour their perception of the play's central question. Would they leap to the conclusion that Father Flynn was therefore guilty and thus demonstrate the certainty that Shanley's play sets out to undermine? Or would they discover that the play instead challenges the easy assumption of guilt?

'Doubt' refuses to allow any easy answers. It follows the play of 'power' in many forms – power that can be both used and abused. In the church, people knew that there was abuse but many chose to turn a blind eye to the truth. Guilty priests were too often protected by their bishops, the easy fix being to move the offender to another parish rather than deal with the transgression. Part of Sister Aloysius' suspicion of Father Flynn lies in the fact that he has been moved three times in five years – but is that alone enough to condemn him?

Father Flynn and Sister James are trying to change the system from within while Sister Aloysius seems determined to preserve the 'old' church.

IDEAS FOR WRITING AND DISCUSSION

1. The audience response to 'Doubt' can be skewed by the particular stage portrayal of its protagonists. How did the interpretation of the actors playing the roles of Sister Aloysius and Father Flynn in this STC production help or hinder you in assessing the validity of their respective positions?
2. The playwright has been quoted as saying, "I wanted to write a play embracing doubt ... about the merit of doubt as opposed to certainty." Debate with a classmate the 'merit of doubt' concerning an issue of your choice. (Consider that adolescent opinions are often firmly rooted in black and white opinions.)
3. Discuss in your theatre class what you think did happen in the unseen meeting between Donald Muller and Father Flynn. Could Donald have disclosed to the priest that he was gay? And if so, how might that evolve? Or might the meeting have been absolutely innocent? When you have worked this out, write the scene as you imagine it, and present it to your class.
4. In Father Flynn's second sermon, the subject is the destructive power of gossip. In your journals, write an account of a time when you were victimized by gossip – or victimized another. What lesson did you learn?
5. The character of Donald Muller's mother makes a brief but powerful appearance in the play. She understands reality and in her understanding, seeks what she perceives to be the best for her son. But if the priest is indeed 'guilty' as Sister Aloysius believes, can you accept Mrs. Muller's argument that it is "just until June" and is a 'lesser evil' than that Donald would face from his father? Defend your opinion.
6. Evaluate the set of this STC production of 'Doubt'. How does the set reflect the world of the play and enhance our response to it?
7. View in class the film version of the play, starring Meryl Streep as Sister Aloysius and Philip Seymour Hoffman as Father Flynn. Compare their respective portrayals to those given by the actors on the STC stage, and explain how the differences impact your emotional response to the story.

ADDITIONAL FOOD FOR THOUGHT

On Church Reform:

After the death of Pope John XXIII in 1963, his successor, Pope Paul VI, declared his intention of seeing the Second Vatican Council through, and reaffirming Pope John's intent of making the Vatican Council continue as the instrument of church renewal. Besides the changes already noted in this guide, reforms included revising the liturgy, modernizing the language of prayer, and altering the relationship between clergy and laity. Not everyone was happy with these changes. Many traditionalist Catholics believed that these reforms moved the church away from important beliefs of the historical church. And this dissatisfaction was not felt along generational lines as one might expect – and as the play reflects. Rogue groups have defied the papal instruction and still covertly celebrate the mass in Latin.

John Patrick Shanley On the Benefit of Doubt:

The more interesting thing to me doesn't have anything to do with the church scandals ... but rather the cathartic, philosophical power of embracing doubt – of embracing not knowing, embracing that you may never know the truth or falsity of a story, or a scenario, and that you cannot morally stand in judgement from any place that is utterly firm in relation to another person's life. And yet, actions must be taken if you feel the imperative, if you feel that you have the clarity of thought and know what should be done. And that [is a] powerful, explosive dilemma for an individual.

There is the culture of doubt and there is the culture of dogma. Both are remedies to the problem of choice.... Religion is often the arbitrator in matters of choice. We look to our church, temple, or mosque for a ruling.

The study of logic includes the idea of the Limited Choice Fallacy. An orator or teacher or politician or priest offers you a choice, but the choice itself is misleading. (Your wife and your mother are both drowning. You can only save one. Which one do you save?) A more immediate question is Iraq. Should we stay in Iraq or should we get out? The question seems to be direct and clear – but it leaps over everything that needs to be discussed and understood. It's dogma framed as choice. So I have a suggestion. Don't fall for it. Responsible, thinking people do not lead a yes –or- no existence. Responsible, thinking people do not have to reduce complicated subjects down to 'for' or 'against'.

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PAINTERS WITH A PURPOSE

STC is pleased to welcome to the lobby the first exhibit of PAINTERS WITH A PURPOSE, a group of local painters who join their love of art to their desire to give back to the community. The group is composed of over fifteen artists from all skill levels who have discovered a love of art through oil painting workshops offered by instructor Stella Marotta. Although many of them are exhibiting for the first time, several have donated their works to charitable organizations like Geneva House and the YMCA to be sold for fund raising purposes.

Artists showcased in the exhibit are

Tony Chezzi	Dolores Fortier	Louise Grottoli
Francine Hurtubise	Ingrid Leers	Richard Legault
Joanne McMahon	Mary Trebb	Paulette Stewart
Lorene Tkachuk	Lorry Williams	Cora Turcotte
Marie Whitehead	Bill Williams	Dr. Moe St. Martin
Stella Marotta		

To see the works of Painters With A Purpose, visit STC at 170 Shaughnessy Street from 9:00 to 5:00 daily, or until 8:00 p.m. during the run of 'Doubt: A Parable' (weekends included). Please visit the STC box office to inquire about purchasing any of the exhibited works, or call STC at 674-8381, extension 21, for further information.

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- Portland Center Stage – PCS Study Guide, 2008 (especially in the work of Martin Andrucki and his synopsis of 'Doubt', and the final article on church reform)
- Hollywood.com website – for biographical information on John Patrick Shanley
- Wikipedia – for further information re: biography, works, awards and nominations
- Reading For Writers @ <http://readingforwriters.blogspot.com/2008/01>