

## Parish Movie Night—Copyright Infringement?

Say your parish social committee has decided to show a video of the movie, “Bella” one Sunday night. Fortunately, one of the members of the social committee owns the video. The social committee will not charge an admission fee, and all parishioners are welcome to attend. Because the parish is a non-profit institution, and the parish is not charging admission, there is no copyright infringement problem, right? WRONG!

The Federal Copyright Act governs how copyrighted materials, such as movies, may be used. Neither the rental nor the purchase of a movie carries with it the right to show the movie outside the home. Thus, a public performance license must be obtained by parishes or schools that show movies for non-classroom use, such as for a social event or informational presentation.

There are some exceptions to the license requirement. For example, the law permits the performance of movies by instructors “in the course of face-to-face teaching activities of a non-profit educational institution, in a classroom or similar space devoted to instruction.” Therefore, our Catholic schools and religious education programs can show films as part of the course curriculum without violating copyright laws.

Obtaining a public performance license is not difficult and not very expensive for non-profit religious institutions. Further information about how to obtain a license can be found online at <http://www.mpaa.org/contentprotection/public-performance-law>