

Christopher Award Winners Highlight the Power of Faith, Courage and Action

Creators of 17 films, TV programs and books will be honored at 62nd annual Christopher Awards



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NEW YORK, April 6, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- (<http://www.myprgenie.com>) -- A mother strives to improve the lives of autistic children; an African-American nun establishes greater racial equality within the Catholic Church; two brothers travel around the world to discover the commonality of the human experience.

These are just a few of the powerful stories told in the books, films, and TV programs that are the winners of the 62nd annual Christopher Awards. Seventeen feature films, TV/cable programs, and books for adults and young people, along with their writers, illustrators, directors, producers and executive producers, will be honored at the gala in New York on Thursday, May 19.

First presented in 1949, **The Christopher Awards** honor writers, producers, directors and illustrators in the publishing, film, TV and cable industries whose work affirms the highest values of the human spirit. "This year's **Christopher Award** winners creatively demonstrate the transformative impact that faith, courage and action can have on people's lives," said Mary Ellen Robinson, vice president of The Christophers.

TV & Cable

Two of the four Christopher Award-winning **TV & Cable** programs come from HBO, including *Making the Crooked Straight*, director/producer Susan Rockefeller's uplifting documentary about Long Island, NY doctor Rick Hodes, whose mission to heal sick children in Ethiopia is founded on the Orthodox Jewish belief that "He who saves one life, saves an entire world."

Also honored from HBO is *A Mother's Courage: Talking Back to Autism*, about an Icelandic woman who travels to the United States to learn more about autism therapies that could potentially help her son.

PBS introduces viewers to *A Place Out Of Time: The Bordentown School*, a fascinating look at the New Jersey school that served as an "educational utopia" for African-Americans for 70 years.

Amish Grace from the Lifetime Movie Network dramatizes the 2006 school shootings in the peaceful Amish community of Nickel Mines, PA, and the community's heart-wrenching struggle to forgive the murderer and support his wife.

Feature Films

The Grassroots Films documentary *The Human Experience* follows two brothers as they live homeless on the streets of New York City, take care of disabled children in Peru, and visit lepers in Africa in order to affirm the inherent dignity of all people. From The Weinstein Company,

The King's Speech presents the story of King George VI of England who overcame a debilitating stammer with the help of a speech therapist to rally his people at the start of World War Two.

Walt Disney Pictures and Pixar Animation Studios' *Toy Story 3* brings Woody, Buzz and the other toys full circle with a tale about friendship, growing up, and letting go.

Also from Walt Disney Pictures is *Secretariat* about the Triple Crown winning horse and the woman who risked everything to make him a champion.

Books for Adults

The Second World War is the setting for two of this year's five **Books For Adults** winners. Eric Metaxas' biography *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Thomas Nelson), provides an in-depth look at the life and faith of Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer who called for German churches to speak out against Nazi policies, and was killed for his role in a plot to overthrow Hitler.

Laura Hillenbrand's *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption* (Random House) explores the life of Army hero Louis Zamperini, what he endured as a Japanese prisoner-of-war after his plane crashed in the Pacific, and how he triumphed over trauma and bitterness.

In *Washington: A Life* (Penguin Press), historian Ron Chernow moves beyond our first President's stoic image to reveal unexplored dimensions of his life and personality, his charismatic leadership, and his dedication to the noble cause of creating a new country.

Thea's Song: The Life of Thea Bowman (Orbis Books), by Charlene Smith and John Feister, chronicles the life of Sister Thea Bowman, an African-American Catholic convert from Canton, Mississippi who helped establish a greater sense of intercultural understanding and inclusion within the Church.

Former Christopher Award-winner Father James Martin, S.J., earns another nod for *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything* (HarperOne) which relates how the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, provides practical ways for all people to manage relationships, money, work, and prayer.

Books for Young People

Young readers learn about growing up, unconditional love, building self-confidence, and American history in the **Books for Young People** category's four winners.

For preschoolers, Mo Willems - a three-time Caldecott Honor winner and former Emmy Award-winning writer/ animator at *Sesame Street* - earns a Christopher Award for

Knuffle Bunny Free: An Unexpected Diversion (Balzer & Bray/Harper Collins), the story of a young girl who loses her beloved stuffed bunny on a trip to Holland, and has to deal with the possibility of never seeing him again.

In ***Would You Still Love Me If...*** (Summit Capital Group) for readers 6-8, writer Wendy LaGuardia and illustrator Patricia Keeler share a heartwarming story about a mother's unconditional love toward her son as she helps him navigate the mistakes and insecurities that are an inevitable part of growing up.

For 8 to 10 year olds, ***Brother Jerome and the Angels in the Bakery*** (Reedy Press), written by PBS cooking host Father Dominic Garramone and illustrated by Richard Bernal, captures the journey from self-doubt to self-confidence traveled by a monk with a talent for baking.

In Russell Freedman's ***Lafayette and the American Revolution*** (Holiday House Books), readers 10-12 discover how a sheltered and strong-willed French teen becomes a respected military officer devoted to liberty and the American struggle for independence.

The Christophers, a nonprofit founded in 1945 by Maryknoll Father James Keller, is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition of service to God and humanity. The proverb - "It's better to light one candle than to curse the darkness" - guides its programs.

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