

Beth Felker Jones's theological film favorites

by [Beth Felker Jones](#) in the [October 15, 2014](#) issue



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*On the second anniversary of our media column, we asked several of our writers to reflect on their favorite theological films.*

I've never seen a film that translates grace to the screen like *Babette's Feast* (directed by Gabriel Axel, 1987). As one of the rare films that focuses on the lined and battered faces of real people, *Babette's Feast* challenges viewers to love real life. The film embraces God's love for the embodied, the ordinary and the value of the extraordinary, and a love that wastes nothing. I cry when I see Babette pinching pennies so that the old people's soup will taste good, then pouring herself out for one delicious, improbable foretaste of the feast to come.

*The Mission* (Roland Joffé, 1986), like *Babette's Feast*, lovingly portrays people who don't usually make it onto the silver screen. The film layers sin and holiness together. It shows the church at its worst: violent, predatory, greedy, and ethnocentric. And it shows the church at its best: a community that values every human life, that loves without counting cost, and from which beautiful voices are raised in praise. The film's music is another foretaste of heaven.

*Little Miss Sunshine* (Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, 2006) helps me to live in the broken, frustrating reality of the church. It's a touching portrayal of how a community—in this case, a family—may be truly odd and broken and yet come together in a way that challenges and laughs at the wrongness of the world.