Movies/Scenes Representing Reconciliation/Forgiveness

http://www.textweek.com/movies/reconciliation.htm

- Changing Lanes (2002)
  - Changing Lanes contains themes of revenge, the evil inside each of us, the need for forgiveness & conversion. It tells the tale of 2 ordinary men (Ben Affleck, a Wall Street lawyer & Samuel L. Jackson, a recovering alcoholic struggling to keep his family together) who enter a vortex of retaliation because of a car accident between the 2 of them. It is an exceptionally complex & interesting portrayal of how any of us might be tempted into extreme measures. Conversion only takes place when each of the men sees the other as a person, moving from extreme self-centeredness into the reality of the other. The movie is replete with symbolism (Christian & other. Light & dark, lots of rain & water) and has William Hurt as S. Jackson's AA sponsor as the voice of his conscience. He tells Gibson (Jackson's character) that he has violated the human covenant & later, tells him that chaos (not alcohol) is his drug of choice. (Deborah G. Seles)
- The Widow of Saint-Pierre (2000)
  - As Neel Auguste, who has been convicted of murder is awaiting execution, helps people around the community and take part in a dramatic rescue, he is accepted as a part of the community to the point that no one there will help in anyway the efforts to execute him. (Darrel Manson, Artesia Christian Church, Artesia, CA)
- Pay It Forward (2000)
  - In "Pay it Forward", the Helen Hunt character goes to her estranged Mother to "pay it forward" with her. In a very powerful scene, Helen Hunt says "Mom, I forgive you." (Chris Fry, Lexington, KY)
- O Brother, Where Art Thou? (2000)
  - The 3 escaped convicts come across the surreal sight of a group of people dressed in white, singing as they move mysteriously through the woods towards the river. They follow, to find the people lining up to be baptized. 2 of the friends rush into the water to be baptized. The first exclaims as he emerges from the water that the minister had told him that all his sins have been washed away. Even, he says, when he stole that pig for which he'd been convicted. "But you said you were innocent of that." "I lied.... and that's been washed away too!!" The character shows a reformed character afterwards, including when he leaves money for the apple pie that his friends steal from a windowsill. (Susie Sanders)
- Fantasia 2000 (1999)
  - A story of love lost and re-found with Donald and Daisy Duck is told as Donald is Noah's assistant to build the ark and survive the great flood in the segment for Pomp and Circumstance. (Kirk VanGilder, Campus Minister, Gallaudet University)
- Magnolia (1999)
- The Green Mile (1999)
  - John Coffey (J.C.) forgives his executioners before his death.
- The Sixth Sense (1999)
  - The scene between Cole and his mother. His mother is reconciled not only to Cole but to her own mother.
- The Confession (1999)
  - Bleakie tells Sarah that she is not responsible for the death of her child.
- Angela's Ashes (1999)

    - Frankie's confession of his life and sins to Saint Francis. Priest: "God forgives you, and you must forgive yourself. God loves you, and you must love yourself. For only when you love God and yourself can you love all of God's creatures." (DVD ch 27)
- The Straight Story (1999)
    - It's a film about aging, what's important, how we change, the power and need for reconciliation, wisdom, the heroic within. It's all shot as thru the eyes of an older person as well so the pace is slow and contemplative. (submitted by Sandi)
    - Alvin Straight's slow, arduous journey on his lawn tractor to bring reconciliation with his brother is a powerful witness to the patience and tenacity that is required if we are to make things right; if we are to tear down walls that separate. Alvin's serendipitous encounters on his journey with ordinary, caring folk underscore the Good News that even though the journey to reconciliation may be painful, we will be surprised by joy in doing what it right in the sight of God. (The Rev. Bob Naylor)
- October Sky (1999)
    - Reconciliation between Homer and his father.
    - Start Cue: Homer asks his father to come and watch the launching of his last rocket. End cue: Father puts arm around Homer's shoulder as they watch rocket go up. (Larry Hustedt)
- American History X (1998)
    - Reconciliation between Derek and Sweeney.
- Smoke Signals (1998)
    - This might fit in several categories -- quest is the first idea that comes to me -- Smoke Signals -- the best movie I have seen for a long time. It is set on the Coeur d'Alene reservation -- 2 young men go a trip of self-discovery and reconnection with parents. Great coming to terms with relationships with fathers. (Ann Fontaine, Lander WY)
- Deconstructing Harry (1997)
    - Harry goes to hell via an elevator, and meets Satan (Billy Crystal). Harry realizes that he has consigned his father to hell, and says that he didn't mean it *that* way. (DVD ch 16)
- The Game (1997)
    - Nicholas apologizes to Elizabeth. She says, "there's nothing to forgive." Powerful reconciliation scene.
- Eye of God (1997)
    - "Children. That's all we are, Lord, if you're out there at all. Your children, boys and girls. Forgive us."
- Harvest of Fire (1996)
    - (A Hallmark Hall of Fame presentation for TV) In this story of Amish barn burnings, the characters deal with rebellion, repentance, forgiveness and a lot more. Excellent movie. We show it to our confirmation class to help them understand the Office of the Keys. (Rev. Trudy A. Peterson)
- The Spitfire Grill (1996)
    - As is said at the Hollywood Jesus site, this movie is excellent with the theme of forgiveness/restitution. (John Young-Powell, Florissant, MO)
- Jerusalem (1996)
    - This movie has the aura of an Ingmar Bergman production, with a series of twists and turns in the plot and thought-provoking motifs. It is based on the novel by Selma Lagerlof, and portrays Swedish peasant life around the turn of the 20th Christian viewers of this movie will likely be interested in the themes of: mainline versus apocalyptic-sectarian faith, authority and power, discerning the truth, suffering and sacrifice, love and forgiveness. I highly recommend Jerusalem because of theological grist for the mill that it provides. (The Rev. Garth Wehrfritz-Hanson)

- Mr. Holland's Opus (1995)
  - Cole in the audience at his father's final concert.
- Priest (1994)
  - "Priest" offers a very moving reconciliation scene at the very end of the film, as the young girl who has been abused by her father, comes forward to receive the Eucharist from the young priest, himself shunned by the rest of the congregants because of revelations about his sexuality. (Meg Queior, Richmond ME)
- The War (1994)
  - The scene where the Dad gives the two children (from the family who beat up his son) some fairy floss he had intended to take home because "they looked like they had never been given anything". (The Scull Family)
  - Classic scenes of loving your enemies & forgiveness. Kevin Costner plays a Viet Nam-vet father who tries to instill non-violence in his kids and struggles to practice it himself. His poor children and their friends are harassed and beat up by the even-poorer Lipnickeys. In scene full of foolish hopes seemingly ripe to be crushed, Costner and a son (Elijah Wood) go to the fair. Somehow the son gets separated, surrounded by Lipnickeys and beaten badly. His father rescues him and takes him to their car, but stops along the way when he sees a couple of Lipnickey children (early elementary age). We expect, as do the children, an angry or violent confrontation. Instead, he presents them each with a cotton candy cone. His son is outraged, but Costner explains, "They looked like nobody had given 'em anything for a long time." (Scott Hill)
- Quiz Show (1994)
  - Although Charlie has disappointed his father and caused disgrace to the family, Mark accompanies and supports Charlie at the congressional hearings. Father stands by son as son confesses family shame in public. (DVD chapter 26-27)
- The Fisher King (1991)
  - The reconciliation between Jack and Parry.
- City Slickers (1991)
  - Another scene I used just this past week in conjunction with the Lectionary passage was when "Phil" goes into the tent after confronting the drunk cowhands. While in the tent he brakes down saying that he is almost 40 years old and his life is a waste. The Billy Crystal character reminds him about that when they were children and they were playing ball that if it got stuck in a tree they would call, "do over." Billy Crystal tells Phil that his life is a clean slate, a do over. The scene ends with Phil questioning the ability to have a do over, Yet the Genesis 9:8-17 (New Covenant/Rainbow), Mark 1:9-15 (Repentance), and 1 Peter 3:18-22 all talk about a "Do Over" with God. Lent is a time we seek to live more fully in the great Do Over of God as we head to it's celebration at Easter. (Vern Gauthier, Summit Hill, PA)
- Flatliners (1990)
  - I have used the movie "Flatliners" starring Julia Roberts and Keiffer Sutherland several times in illustrating forgiveness. The whole movie deals with this theme. One character needs forgiveness from a woman he teased as a child to make his delusions go away. Another character needs to forgive her father for committing suicide when she was young. The last character needs to forgive himself for accidentally killing another boy when he was younger. The moral: Only forgiveness can rid us of our "ghosts." Only Christ can offer true forgiveness. (Troy Schroeder, First Christian Church, La Crosse, Kansas)
- Field of Dreams (1989)
  - An Iowa farmer hears a mysterious voice borne on the wind blowing through his corn field, "If you build it, he will come!" The voice becomes more insistent, until he gives in and builds a baseball diamond, complete with lights for night games and bleachers for

spectators. A host of long-dead ball players come out of the night fog of the corn to play on the ball field, one asking, "Is this heaven?" To which, the farmer responds, "It's Iowa." But the real "He" who was to come is the farmer's long estranged and now dead father. In a simple game of "catch" on the field they have a chance to talk, see life from the other's point of view, and experience forgiveness and a restored relationship. (Mark D. Johns, Instructor of Communication/Linguistics, Luther College, Decorah, Iowa)

- Dominick and Eugene (1988)
- The Mission (1986)
  - Rodrigo emerges from his climb up the falls to be forgiven and accepted by the very people he had sinned against. (submitted by Charlotte Hoppe)
  - The scene where Robert de Niro has a huge weight of armor cut away by the natives he used to hunt. Powerful display of forgiveness. (Luke Whiteside, *Youth Alpha Australia*)
- Hoosiers (1986)
  - A son visiting his dad, a recovering alcoholic, demonstrates unconditional love by telling him he loves him. Start cue: "No school to small" End cue: "Anyway, no school this small has ever been in the state championships". (Luke Whiteside,*Youth Alpha Australia*)
- The Color Purple (1985)
  - Traveling blues singer Shug Avery has been estranged from her pastor father for decades, because of her decision to sing secular music. One morning, while she's visiting her hometown, she decides that she feels like singing. She opens the local "juke joint" and begins singing her signature song. As a crowd gathers around the singer, the scene cuts to her father's church. As he is preaching, sounds from the juke joint drift in through the open windows. Someone in the congregation prompts the choir to begin singing "God Might Be Trying to Tell You Something." As the choir gets louder, Shug hears and begins singing along. As the song progresses, she leads everyone from the juke joint (band and all) to the church. She walks up to her father and puts her arms around him. She whispers, "See, daddy, even sinners have soul." He returns her embrace as tears fill her eyes. (David K. Miller)
  - There is a wonderful scene in "The Color Purple" where a prodigal jazz singer returns to her estranged father in an act of repentance and reconciliation. (Bruce T. Jones)
  - Just before the choir begins singing, Shug's daddy is preaching on the prodigal "son" text. Also, Shug walks across a bridge that goes over a creek which separates the juke joint side of the creek from the church side. Might be stretching it a bit, but the juke joint was a hell of sorts and the church is heaven in comparison! (Sandy Chace)
- Places in the Heart (1984)
  - Final Eucharist scene - reconciliation and interconnectedness between characters in the story.
- Wee Willie Winkie (1937)
  - "The setting of this movie is 19th century British-occupied India. Shirley Temple and her widowed mother (June Lang as Joyce Williams), travel to India to live with grandfather/father-in-law, Colonel Williams. At first, the British outpost is an oppressive place, ruled with an iron military fist. Priscilla is a most curious, precocious child. After a series of adventures, she wins the hearts of everyone by challenging prejudicial assumptions of both friends and enemies. Her innocent, yet challenging questions are instrumental in helping Colonel Williams and Islamic freedom fighter, Khoda Khan to see the senselessness of violence, leading to a negotiated peace between the two enemies. Themes: the peaceful kingdom (Isaiah 11:1-9, especially verse 6), reconciliation transforming enemies into friends, children and God?s realm (Matthew 18:1-4), courageous love (I John 4:18). Recommended for family viewing." (Reviewed by the Rev. Garth Wehrfritz-Hanson)